



# Annual Report 2023



**SRI LANKA FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY WAIKATO INC.**

# Our Funders



## Digital Marketing & Graphic Design

Special Thanks to Hasadara Ranasinghe & Imali Ilanco.

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## President's Message

Our history as a society spans more than five decades, and officially, SLFS was founded in 1994. It is an immense privilege to serve as the President for the year 2022-2023, a year that has seen its fair share of challenges and triumphs.

Our journey as a community has been marked by numerous ups and downs, but our collective spirit and unwavering determination have guided us through every twist and turn. It is imperative that we take a moment to express our heartfelt appreciation to all the past committees, whose tireless efforts have played a pivotal role in bringing our community to the thriving state it is today. Their dedication is the bedrock upon which we continue to build.

I would be remiss if I didn't extend my gratitude to each and every one of our community members. Your support, whether through active participation or silent encouragement, has been instrumental in making our year a resounding success. Together, we are the driving force that propels SLFS forward.

My deepest acknowledgments also go to my dedicated executive committee members and their families. The support and sacrifices made by our committee, often behind the scenes, have been indispensable in ensuring the smooth operation of our society. This year, in particular, stands as a testament to your commitment and resilience. Organizing events after the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic was no easy feat, but together, we overcame obstacles and emerged stronger than ever.

In reflecting on our achievements, I firmly believe that our most significant accomplishment as a community has been the planting of the seeds of our Sri Lankan culture in the hearts and minds of our children. In passing down our traditions, values, and heritage to the next generation, we secure the continuity of our rich cultural tapestry. It is through these efforts that we ensure our traditions are carried forward, even in the face of modernity and change.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge and thank our funders and sponsors. Their support has been instrumental in making this year a success. Without their generous contributions, our endeavors would not have been possible, and I extend my sincere appreciation for their belief in our mission.

In conclusion, I extend my best wishes to SLFS, its members, and our community. Let us stand resolute in our commitment to preserving our Sri Lankan heritage and creating a brighter future for all. Together, we will navigate the challenges of tomorrow and celebrate the triumphs that await us on this remarkable journey.

Lastly, I would like to assure our incoming committee that we stand ready to support and guide them in the coming year to ensure their success and the continued growth of our beloved SLFS.

Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication.

Sincerely



**Shamal Fernando**  
President

## Secretary's Message

The year 2022-2023 was a challenge we eagerly embraced, as we took over the committee in October 2022. What set this year apart is that not a single member had prior experience with the committee; we all embarked on this journey as newcomers, ready to learn from the ground up. The very fact that we had to start from scratch, in retrospect, was what made us exceptionally strong and resilient.

Our committee, a rich tapestry of diverse talents and backgrounds, became the cornerstone of our success. Each individual brought something unique to the table, and it was this diversity that became our greatest strength. Together, we were not just a committee; we were a united force, ready to tackle any challenge that came our way. Our determination and mutual support became the bedrock of our success.

As we present this Annual Report, I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to the families of our executive committee members. Without your unwavering support and understanding, this year's successes would have been much harder to achieve. Your patience, encouragement, and sacrifices did not go unnoticed. Our gratitude extends to each of you for making it possible for your loved ones to dedicate their time and energy to our committee.

Our work would also not have been possible without the silent but steadfast support of the Sri Lankan Community in Waikato. The community is filled with remarkable individuals who, in their own way, have contributed to our collective success. Your support, encouragement, and commitment to our initiatives have been a vital part of our journey.

We have not only accomplished our goals this year but, in doing so, we believe we have added a touch of Sri Lankan culture and heritage to the minds of our children. By preserving and sharing our roots, we are shaping the future and fostering a deep appreciation of our rich heritage.

To each and every one of you, our committee members, our families, and the Sri Lankan community in Waikato, I extend my sincere thanks. Your support, dedication, and collaboration have made this year a truly memorable one. Together, we have made a positive impact, and I am confident that we will continue to do so in the years to come.

As we move forward, let us remain united and determined, cherishing our collective accomplishments, and looking forward to new opportunities.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sandun Samarathunga', written in a cursive style.

**Sandun Samarathunga**  
**Secretary**



## Executive Committee



Shamal Fernando  
(President)



Sandun Samaratunga  
(Secretary)



Dinali Ranmadugala  
(Vice President)



Niel Perera  
(Treasurer)



Geeth Croos



Kapila Alahakoon



Ranga Kulasooriya



Roshan Perera



Prasad Wickramasinghe



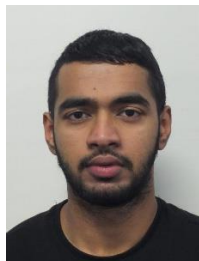
Sithika Fernando



Devinda Mahavithana  
(Former President)



Priyantha Weerakkodi



Dasith Ranasinghe

## Our Events

In this year's annual report, the Sri Lanka Friendship Society proudly presents a vibrant tapestry of events and initiatives that underscore our unwavering commitment to preserving the rich cultural values and traditions of our Sri Lankan heritage while nurturing greater harmony and connections among our community members. Throughout the past year, we have fervently dedicated ourselves to organizing a diverse range of activities, from cultural festivals to social gatherings and educational workshops. These endeavors collectively demonstrate our relentless pursuit of fostering a stronger sense of unity and shared identity within our community, as we continue to celebrate the beauty of our cultural tapestry and strengthen the bonds that tie us together.

### ***“Follow the Star”*** Christmas Gathering 2022

Sri Lanka is a nation known for its rich tapestry of diverse religions. At Sri Lankan Friendship Society, we have a long-standing tradition of coming together as one family to celebrate Christmas.

Our annual event, *“Follow the Star”* Christmas carols evening in 2022, which took place on December 11<sup>th</sup> at Elim Church Auditorium, brought together the Sri Lankan community in Waikato and their families. The primary purpose of this gathering is to celebrate the birth of Jesus and share the message of Christmas, making it a special and meaningful occasion for everyone, especially our children.

This event exemplifies our unity and diversity, as Sri Lankans from all walks of life come together to cherish the spirit of Christmas. It's a time when we join hands, regardless of our individual beliefs, to celebrate the values of love, peace, and togetherness that Christmas represents. Our main focus during this event is to impart the timeless message of Christmas to the young minds of our community, ensuring that they grow up with a deep understanding of the significance of this holiday.





## *“Welcome 2023”* New Year Eve Celebration

Every year, the Sri Lankan Friends in Waikato gather on New Year's Eve to welcome the approaching year with a lively dinner dance. This year was exceptionally special as we had the privilege of featuring live music from our very own "Thaprobana" music group. It turned the evening into a truly fantastic and memorable occasion.

We want to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Thaprobana team for their unwavering support, which played a significant role in making this event a resounding success. Your music added a unique and enchanting dimension to our celebration, and we are truly grateful for your contribution.

As we came together to mark the transition from 2022 to 2023, we also took a moment to reflect on the achievements and milestones of the past year. This event allows us to share in each other's successes and aspirations for the year ahead.

With the music in the background and the spirit of togetherness in the air, we bid adieu to 2022 and greeted 2023 with open hearts and warm wishes. We hope that the new year will bring joy, prosperity, and continued success to each and every one of us.

The New Year's Eve Dinner Dance is more than just an annual event; it's a tradition that symbolizes the unity and celebration within our Sri Lankan community in Waikato. We look forward to creating more cherished memories in the future and sharing in the journey that lies ahead.





## 75<sup>th</sup> Independence Day Celebration

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2023, Sri Lanka celebrated its momentous 75<sup>th</sup> Independence Day. Even though we are miles away from our motherland, it is crucial for us as a society to impart the knowledge of our rich history to our children. With the collaborative efforts of parents, we successfully conducted several history lessons for our young ones. What they learned was presented during the 75<sup>th</sup> Independence Day ceremony on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at New Life Church Auditorium in the form of a school classroom question and answer session.

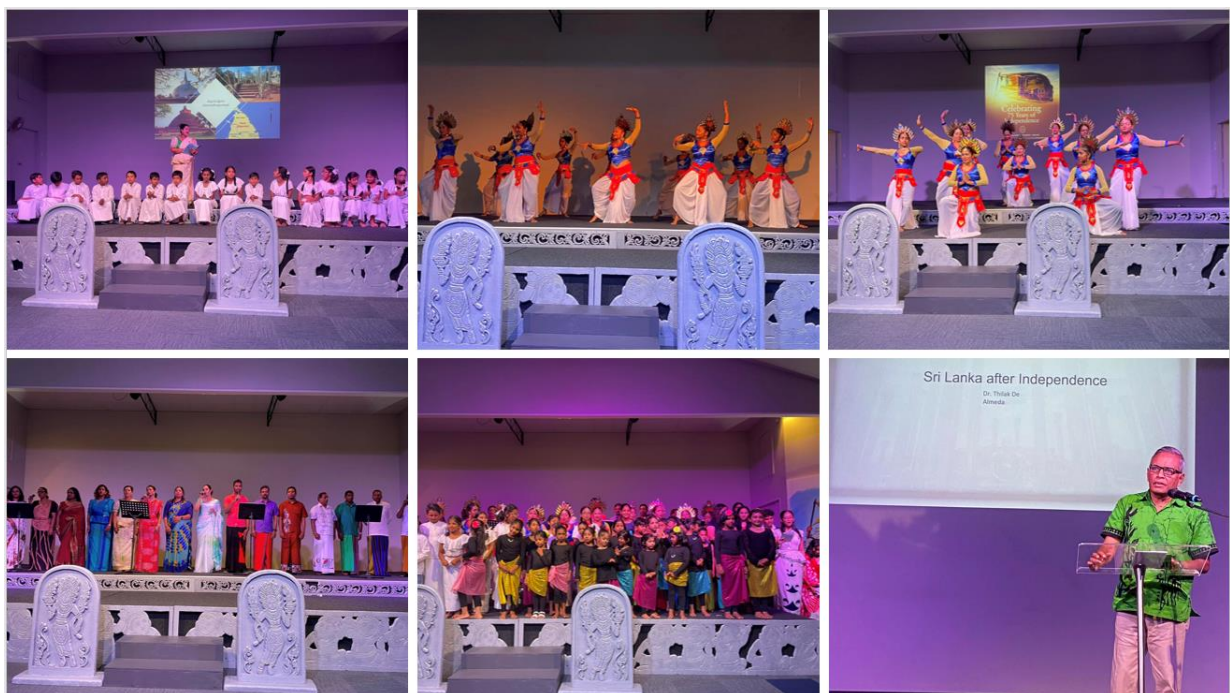
The dedication and enthusiasm of our children in sharing their newfound knowledge were met with great appreciation from the esteemed guests in attendance. We were honoured to have Angela O'Leary, Deputy Mayor of Hamilton, Jamie Strange, Member of Parliament, and Ravinder Powar, President of the Waikato Multicultural Council, join us for this special occasion. Their presence and encouragement meant a great deal to us and our children.

Additionally, our young kids showcased their talent and cultural heritage by performing a mesmerizing traditional Sri Lankan dance, including "Lee Keli," "Kulu," and "Kala." The grace and precision with which they executed these dances were truly commendable.

Not to be outdone, our adult dance team impressed the audience with a captivating performance that seamlessly blended all three Sri Lankan dance styles: "Uda Rata," "Pahatha Rata," and "Sabaragamu." Their dedication to preserving our cultural heritage through dance was nothing short of inspiring.

The success of this event would not have been possible without the unwavering support of our parents and children. Your dedication, hard work, and enthusiasm truly made this celebration a resounding success.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to this event, whether through participation, organization, or attendance. It is your collective efforts that allow us to keep our Sri Lankan heritage alive and thriving, even in distant lands.



**“Annual Cricket Match”:** Rotorua Lions Vs Hamilton Lions

Traditionally, SLFS (Sri Lankan Friendship Society) has always been a staunch supporter of the Hamilton Lions Cricket Club. In keeping with this tradition, we were pleased to support the Annual Cricket Match between Rotorua Lions and Hamilton Lions, which took place on the 5th of February 2023 at Discovery Park in Hamilton.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of this event. Your support, both in terms of donations and on-ground assistance, played a significant role in making this cricket match a memorable and enjoyable occasion.

Your unwavering support ensures that we can continue to foster a sense of community and solidarity while promoting the sport of cricket. We look forward to your continued support in the future and to many more exciting Cricket matches in the years to come.





## *“Awurudu”* Sports Day 2023

Sri Lankans have a unique tradition of celebrating their New Year in April, a time when the sun transitions from Meena Rashiya (the house of Pisces) to Mesha Rashiya (the house of Aries). This cultural celebration is marked by a rich combination of traditions, bringing families and communities together.

In keeping with this tradition, the Sri Lankan community in Waikato came together on the 1st of April 2023 to celebrate the spirit of the Sri Lankan New Year. The event was a vibrant and joyful occasion, where community members dressed in traditional Sri Lankan attire, enjoyed delicious traditional foods, and involved in many different traditional sports and games.

The event was particularly memorable for the children, who reveled in the festivities. Both kids and adults alike enjoyed the traditional activities and the spirit of togetherness. The joy of the occasion was amplified by the exchange of presents and the shared laughter among family and friends.

This celebration exemplified the enduring bonds within the Sri Lankan community in Waikato and the commitment to preserving and passing on our cherished cultural traditions to the next generation. We look forward to continuing these celebrations and creating more beautiful memories in the years to come.

We express our gratitude to everyone who participated and contributed to making this event a truly remarkable one. Your involvement and enthusiasm are integral to the success of such cultural gatherings, and we appreciate your dedication to our shared heritage.





## "නවමිණි" Cultural show 2023

The "නවමිණි" (Nawamini) Cultural Show 2023, organized by SLFS, marked a significant milestone as the largest event of the year. This splendid celebration took place on the 21st of May 2023 at the Clarence Street Theater in Hamilton, bringing together the Sri Lankan community in the Waikato region.

In his welcoming speech, our president highlighted the significance of the event name, "නවමිණි" (Nawamini), which translates to "New Gems." This name symbolizes the valuable contributions of our children and newcomers to the Hamilton and Waikato region. Just as new gems bring fresh talents and brilliance to our society, so do these children, youth, and individuals who have migrated to New Zealand.

The event featured a grand showcase of talent, with around 20 songs and dance performances by children, youth, and adults. The distinguished guests in attendance were effusive in their appreciation of the event and the SLFS's commitment to preserving and promoting Sri Lankan culture within the Waikato community.

Our esteemed Chief Guest, Paula Southgate, the mayor of Hamilton, was particularly impressed by the multifaceted talents displayed by our children. She praised not only their dancing and singing abilities but also their exceptional skills in public speaking as they compered the event with grace and confidence.

The success of this event was made possible through the tireless efforts of many individuals and teams. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the Choreographers, Coordinators, Backstage Operations Team, Marketing Team (Sponsorships and Advertisements), Technical Team, our dedicated executive team, and their supportive families. Countless sleepless nights were spent to ensure the event's success.

We also express our gratitude to our funders, with a special thanks to the Ethnic Communities Development Fund for their support. Our Gold, Silver, and Souvenir sponsors played a crucial role in facilitating the success of this event through their generous contributions.

The "නවමිණි" (Nawamini) Cultural Show 2023 was a testament to the strength and unity of the Sri Lankan community in Waikato. It showcased the rich cultural heritage and the incredible talents of our community members. We look forward to continuing our tradition of preserving and sharing our Sri Lankan culture in the years to come.

Thank you to everyone who played a part in making this event a resounding success.



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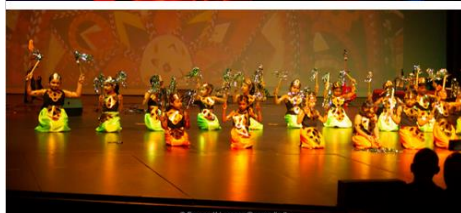


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Alt Text: A group of men singing on...

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## ***"DJ Night"*** Cultural Evening

Following our cultural show, it has become a cherished tradition to invite everyone to join us for a delightful dinner and a lively DJ night. In 2023, we hosted our cultural evening and DJ night at the Hamilton Contract Bridge Club, and it was a night to remember.

This year was particularly special, as we had the privilege of welcoming the Hamilton-based Sri Lankan DJ team, "DJ DazZ," who provided the musical backdrop for the evening. Their performance added an extra layer of excitement and entertainment to the event.

To complement the music, we were treated to an array of delicious Sri Lankan cuisine, thanks to the culinary talents of "Ciao Ceyloan" and "Ceyloan Salt and Pepper." The flavors and aromas of these dishes transported us back to the heart of Sri Lanka, making it a culinary experience to savor.

The combination of great music, delectable food, and the warmth of our community members made this evening truly memorable. It was a time of laughter, dancing, and building lasting memories with friends and family.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making this evening a resounding success, from the organizers to the performers, food providers, and all those who attended. Your presence and enthusiasm added to the magic of the night, and we look forward to creating more such memorable moments in the future.

Thank you for being an integral part of this special tradition.





## “මුනි පාසිණි පවති ගී රසානන්දය” 2023 (Poson Program)

"පොසන්" (Poson) holds a significant place in Sri Lankan culture as a Buddhist celebration that commemorates the arrival of Buddhism to the island. As part of this time-honored tradition, we typically welcome Sri Lankan temple monks to perform Buddhist customs and prayers, followed by engaging in Dhamma discussions.

This year, we added an extra dimension to our celebration by incorporating a Mindfulness (Meditation) program for both kids and adults. The program was conducted by Ven. Rohini from the New Zealand Bhikkhuni Sangha Trust. It allowed participants to delve into the practice of mindfulness and meditation, fostering a deeper understanding of Buddhist principles.

The success of this event was made possible through the collaborative efforts and support of various individuals and groups. We express our gratitude to the Hamilton Vihara Dhamma School teachers, and the guidance provided by Ven. Dunuwilla Meththeyiya Thero, whose expertise and leadership were integral to the event's success.

Funding for this event was made possible by the Department of Internal Affairs COVID-19 Community Wellbeing Fund, which enabled us to organize and host this meaningful and culturally significant celebration.

This "පොසන්" (Poson) event not only allows us to pay homage to our rich cultural and religious heritage but also provides an opportunity for learning and reflection. We are grateful to all those who played a part in making this event a success and for their dedication to preserving and sharing our cultural and spiritual traditions within the community.



## Mind Energy Youth Leadership Development Program & Psychology Session

The challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic have been particularly impactful on our community, especially in light of lockdowns and increased screen time for children and youth, who have turned to computers and tablets for various activities. This surge in digital engagement has raised concerns for parents who seek guidance on how to navigate the digital landscape, including social media and the internet, with their children.

Recognizing the mental health implications of this trend, New Zealand has identified it as an essential area for post-COVID support. In alignment with these concerns, the Sri Lankan Friendship Society (SLFS) took proactive steps to address these challenges. Thanks to the support of the COVID-19 Community Wellbeing Fund, we were able to organize a youth leadership and psychology session for kids, youth, and parents on 8<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at Hillcrest Normal School Main Hall.

As part of this comprehensive program, the SLFS travel club also conducted a speech contest, providing a platform for young voices to be heard and shared. This event aimed to empower and engage our youth, offering them an opportunity to express their thoughts, concerns, and aspirations.

The event was an outstanding success, thanks to the collective contributions of many individuals, parents, and community members. We express our gratitude to all those who played a part in making this event a reality, from the organizers to the participants and attendees. Your support and dedication have been instrumental in addressing a vital aspect of our community's well-being during these challenging times.

We remain committed to supporting our youth and families, especially during the evolving landscape of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we look forward to more collaborative efforts to address their needs and concerns in the future. Thank you for your valuable contributions.





## “අඳුර වීදි හඳ” (Musical & Social night)

As a culmination of the COVID-19 Community Wellbeing Fund program, we organized the "අඳුර වීදි හඳ" Musical & Social Night to bring our community together and celebrate our resilience in overcoming the challenges posed by COVID-19. This heartwarming event took place on the 22nd of July 2023 at the Hillcrest Chapel.

The event was a tremendous success, with an impressive turnout of around 300-400 people. It was a joyous occasion where everyone came together to dance and sing to the enchanting tunes of Sri Lankan music, fostering a sense of unity and celebration.

One of the highlights of the evening was the presence of newcomers from Sri Lanka who joined us in savoring the delicious food and enjoying the vibrant music. Their participation added to the event's cultural richness and diversity.

A special note of appreciation goes to the Thaprobana Music group members, whose support was instrumental in making this event a resounding success. We would also like to express our gratitude to Mr. Dilhan Fernando, the harmonium player, for his contribution to the musical experience.

Finally, we want to extend our thanks to each and every individual who supported and contributed to making this event a reality. Your dedication and participation played a vital role in bringing our community together and creating a memorable and enjoyable evening. We look forward to more such gatherings in the future and to continuing our tradition of unity and celebration within the Sri Lankan community.





## Fundraising Events

### Yellow Pages Directory Distribution

Our most significant fundraising event, the Yellow Pages Directory distribution, has been a resounding success. In 2022 November, we undertook the distribution in the Hamilton East, Hamilton West, and Frankton areas, and we are thrilled to share the results of our efforts.

Our SLFS community rallied together in tremendous support, and we were able to distribute more than 25,000 directories to households and businesses in these areas. This accomplishment speaks to the dedication and commitment of our community members in achieving our shared goals.

Even more remarkably, our fundraising efforts were highly fruitful, resulting in the collection of over \$15,000 in funds for our society. These funds will enable us to continue our cultural, community, and charitable activities, providing invaluable support to our Sri Lankan community in Waikato.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of this significant fundraising endeavor. Your hard work and dedication have had a direct and positive impact on our society, enabling us to further our mission and continue to serve our community effectively. We look forward to more successful initiatives and continued community support in the future.



## Sausage Sizzle Fundraiser

To support our events, the committee made the decision to conduct a Sausage Sizzle fundraiser, a choice that proved to be a great success. We are immensely grateful to Mitre 10 MEGA Ruakura for their generous support. They kindly provided us with their premises, a BBQ, and the necessary gas to host the Sausage Sizzle fundraiser on the 12th, 19th, and 26th of March for full-day sessions.

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Imali Ilanco and Piumi Perera, who played pivotal roles in organizing these events. Their dedication and hard work were instrumental in the success of our fundraiser.

We were fortunate to receive outstanding support from our community. Generous donations of bread, sausages, and other essential items made our Sausage Sizzle fundraiser possible. Furthermore, our cricket teams, youth members, and members of the Catholic community came forward to assist us in the operation and sale of sausages.

Their collective efforts ensured that our Sausage Sizzle fundraiser not only ran smoothly but also garnered significant support and enthusiasm from the community. We sincerely thank all those who contributed to making this fundraiser a success, as your support is invaluable in helping us continue our cultural and community activities. We look forward to more opportunities for collaboration and community involvement in the future.





## Youth and Social Growth Initiatives

### Traditional Dancing Club

The Traditional Kandyan Dancing Club, a prominent club conducted by SLFS, stands as a cultural gem within our Sri Lankan community in Waikato. This club not only preserves our rich heritage but also proudly represents our community in various multicultural events throughout the region.

Our Kandyan Dancing team has graced numerous multicultural gatherings, including the Waikato Multi-Cultural Evening organized by the Waikato Multi-Cultural Council, the Indigo Festival as part of the Greater Hamilton Gardens Arts festivals, and the "නවමිණි" (Nawamini) Cultural Show in 2023.

We are fortunate to have an exceptional teaching crew who have played a pivotal role in passing down our traditional dance forms to the next generation. We extend our deepest gratitude to Nissanka Weerekoon, Inakshe Amarasinghe, Dinesha Kumarawansa, Gayani Weralupitiya, and our talented drummers, Shashith Fernando and Harshitha Colonne. Their voluntary dedication ensures that our cultural traditions continue to flourish.

Behind the scenes, we also acknowledge our coordinator, Disna Galappaththi, for her tireless efforts in managing the club's operations. Furthermore, we appreciate the support and contributions of parents who have played an integral role in numerous ways to facilitate the success of our dancing club.

The Traditional Kandyan Dancing Club is a testament to the strength and unity of our Sri Lankan community in Waikato, and the dedication of these individuals ensures the preservation and continued celebration of our rich cultural heritage. We look forward to the continued growth and success of our Kandyan Dancing Club, and we thank everyone who has contributed to its achievements.





## Chess Club

The SLFS Chess Club is an integral part of our community, and it plays a pivotal role in the lives of our children. It not only provides them with a platform for social interaction but also serves as an avenue for intellectual growth and development. Chess, as a strategic game, has been proven to increase IQ, promote critical thinking, and enhance core math and verbal skills.

In an effort to further nurture this passion for chess, we hosted the internal test tournament on the 19th of February 2023 at the Hamilton Bridge Club. This event allowed our young members to put their skills to the test and provided a valuable learning experience.

We are fortunate to have been able to secure the services of a talented chess trainer who guides and mentors our kids. Their dedication and expertise contribute significantly to the growth and development of our young chess enthusiasts.

This year, we expanded our chess club's reach by opening its doors to other communities. We are pleased to have two Chinese children enrolled in the club, fostering cross-cultural friendships and learning experiences.

We extend our special thanks to our coordinator, Roshan Perera, and the parent volunteers who have been instrumental in supporting and organizing the activities of the Chess Club. Their dedication ensures the success and growth of the club, and we are grateful for their contributions.



## Gravel Club

The SLFS Gravel Club has played a vital role in nurturing leadership skills and public speaking abilities among our children. This club has been instrumental in empowering our kids to become confident speakers and emerging leaders within the community.

Their talents were on full display during the speech contests held as part of the "Mind Energy" Youth Leadership Development Program. These contests provided an excellent platform for our children to express their ideas and hone their public speaking skills. The confidence and eloquence they exhibited during these competitions were truly commendable.

Additionally, the Gravel Club kids took on the important role of comperes for various SLFS events. Their enthusiastic and articulate presence as hosts greatly enhanced the quality and impact of these occasions. Their performances were highly regarded and appreciated by the invited guests and attendees, adding a special touch to our events.

This significant progress within the Gravel Club would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our coordinator, Roshan Perera, who played a crucial role in shaping the club's activities. We also express our deep appreciation for the parent volunteers whose support has been invaluable in organizing and facilitating club events.





## Badminton Club

The SLFS Badminton Club has played a significant role in promoting the well-being of our community, providing opportunities for physical activity, social engagement, and skill development. This year, we were fortunate to secure funding from the Lion Foundation, which allowed us to continue and expand our badminton program.

With the support of this funding, we were able to provide training sessions with a coach, enhancing the quality of our badminton program. These training sessions have not only improved the skills of our participants but have also contributed to the overall enjoyment and camaraderie within the club.

The Badminton Club has also served as a valuable social platform for our youth and adults, offering a great way to stay active while connecting with others in a fun and friendly environment.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Kapila Alahakoon and Priyantha Weerakkodi for their outstanding coordination of the Badminton Club. Their dedication and efforts have been essential in maintaining and enhancing this club's activities. We also want to express our gratitude to all the adult volunteers who have selflessly contributed to the success of the club, making it a vibrant and inclusive part of our community.

The SLFS Badminton Club continues to be a beacon of physical fitness, skill development, and community interaction, and we look forward to its continued growth and success. Thank you to all who have supported and participated in this valuable initiative.





## Hamilton Empathetic Nexus

Recognizing a long-standing need in Hamilton to assist Sri Lankan newcomers, the Sri Lanka Friendship Society (SLFS) committee, along with dedicated Sri Lankans residing in Hamilton, launched the Hamilton Empathetic Nexus. This initiative came in response to a surge in community requests following the reopening of borders amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The primary aim of Hamilton Empathetic Nexus is to provide essential support for new migrants as they settle into Hamilton. Services offered include assistance in finding jobs, housing or rental accommodations, access to immigration lawyers, locating medical centres, including Sri Lankan doctors, and various other vital resources. While these may seem like simple services, they have proven to be incredibly beneficial for our community. Furthermore, the initiative has expanded to include educational support, with Math and Science classes for intermediate and high school students, made possible through the invaluable contributions of kind-hearted volunteers. The Refugee Orientation Centre (ROC) in Hamilton has generously provided a venue for our education program, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the ROC team for their support. Looking ahead, we are excited to announce the launch of storytelling and drama classes for our kids, commencing on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023. We are committed to continuing our mission of providing unwavering support to our community and fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment among Sri Lankan newcomers in Hamilton.



## Financial Report