

BAPS NATIONAL SPONSORED FAMILY WALK & FUN RUN 2008

Sunday 6 April 2008

Despite the bitterly cold weather and heavy snow, the annual BAPS Sponsored Family Walk & Fun Run was successfully held at fourteen BAPS Swaminarayan Mandirs and Centres around the UK on Sunday 6 April 2008. The year's event was held in conjunction with Diabetes UK, the largest organisation in the country working to improve the lives of people with diabetes.

The main walk in London commenced with a traditional opening ceremony in the Haveli of the BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir in Neasden. Chief Guest at the ceremony was Douglas Smallwood, Chief Executive of Diabetes UK, who addressed the assembly and offered his personal gratitude to BAPS for organising this event. "I would like to thank everybody here ever so much for coming out today and supporting our charity. With your efforts, you will make a difference and help us reach the 750,000 people we need to reach". Other invited guests included Dawn Butler (MP for Brent South), Barry Gardiner (MP for Brent North) and the Mayor of Brent, Councillor Harshad Patel.

The walk in London commenced shortly after 9:00am when walkers and runners enthusiastically made their way to this year's venue, the scenic setting of Gladstone Park in Dollis Hill. Special arrangements were made for youngsters between the ages of 4 and 7 to walk in the Mandir complex itself. The oldest walkers were in their 90s.

More than 3,200 registrants braved the challenging conditions to participate in the 10 km-walk at London and thirteen other centres around the country: Ashton, Birmingham, Cardiff, Coventry, Havant, Milton Keynes, Leicester, Loughborough, Luton, Nottingham, Preston, Southend-on-Sea, and Wellingborough. The routes were stewarded by BAPS volunteers and provisions for medical assistance and refreshments were available at key rest points. A cleaning team also ensured that all litter from the event found its proper place in the special bins provided.

Locals marvelled at the determination and enthusiasm of the walkers, runners and volunteers to come out in such large numbers on a snowy white Sunday morning, but it seemed nothing could dampen the charity spirit of BAPS members to give back to their local community. At the Mandir in London, BAPS also helped arrange a special Diabetes UK screening clinic for local community members.

The event turned out to be an extremely enjoyable day for the whole family. It also proved hugely successful in raising funds for **BAPS'** multifarious charitable activities and **Diabetes UK**, as well as numerous local charities around the country. These included: the Children's Intensive Care Unit at the **Leicester Royal Infirmary** (Leicester); **Acorns Children's Hospice Trust** (Birmingham), which cares for life-limited children and their families; **Baby Lifeline** (Coventry), offering support to pregnant mothers and newborns; and **The Mayor's Welfare Trust** (Loughborough).

For further information:

Please visit www.bapswalk.org or contact Yogesh Patel at info@mandir.org or on 07836 592 131.