

BITS STUDENTS HELP TO IMPROVE LIVES OF ELDERLY

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Panaji: At a time when the gulf between the young and the old is widening, resulting in increased cases of abuse against the elders, Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS) has taken up in bridging this gap by exposing their students to the life of senior citizens through the NGO HelpAge India.

It is vital to know that BITS has a close connection with HelpAge India and the elderly since HelpAge India chief executive officer (CEO) Mathew Cherian is a BITS Pilani alumnus.

BITS assistant professor Pravin Mane said, "After the second year of their Engineering we send them for internships to various NGOs as well. Almost thirty to forty percent of our students are interested in social work."

Talking about the how Engineering students can help in improving the lives of elderly people Mane added that "Students should know about the problem and thus enable the youngsters to empathise with



The students of various BITS institutes carrying placards spreading the message of elder abuse on the occasion of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day near the Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception Church, Panaji.

senior citizens and elderly people."

Currently, almost hundred BITS students are working with 10 HelpAge India centres. According to Mane with such programmes and internships, it is possible to bring awareness in the society through students.

"As a social responsibility they have a subject in the college related to social service and our NGO (HelpAge India) is also doing social service whose main focus is on elderly people," informed HelpAge India students exchange far value education executive Gabriel Fernandes.

He further added, "Students are much more involved in the social issues now, they are also willing to do awareness session into different places, they are much more aware of the social responsibility they should do."

Remembering his experience with elderly abused BITS Goa student Siddhartha said, "One of the people I know sent an elderly woman to an old age centre after the family lost their abnormal daughter in a kitchen accident. Basically it was a situation of emotional conflict between elderly and a family member."

BITS Goa student Gurkirat Guliani during their awareness programme said, "youngsters feel that the elderly are of no help to them but we don't realise that they have rich experiences which can be used for guiding us."

When these Engineering students went to different areas of Panaji during their awareness campaign they noticed that kids and elders were more interested in awareness than youth and people of their age.