

**Vanakkam to You All Again, and May This Newsletter Find You in Good Spirits.**

We are enthusiastically preparing for the 2010-11 academic year. Seven classrooms are being renovated, and the dingy spaces that used to be our library and art room have been transformed into storerooms for six of the classrooms. The rest of the campus is getting freshly painted. It is great fun for me to work with masons and painters during the summer holidays. We are making plans for the coming year, which include participation in the Auroville Film Festival,

mulching the ground and planting trees in Sadhana Forest, growing vegetables and herbs in the school garden, doing interesting micro projects and of course our regular academic programme.

We are also saying good bye to our 8th graders, most of whom will continue their education at New Era Secondary School, Auroville

Many thanks for being with us, Shankar (Principal)

**Aikiyam School says Farewell to 8th Grade Students**

We want our friends and supporters to know how much the years in this school mean to the 8th grade students who are leaving. Some of the students were here from the age of 3 when the school was under the guidance of Roy and called New Creation Bilingual School. Here are some of their thoughts:

**Saraswati:** "All the teachers tell us that we will forget them once we leave from the school. But we will never forget them."

**Vignesh:** "In Creche we went to the beach once a week to collect shells, swim and to enjoy. So I started liking to come to school."

**Arul:** "We are fortunate to study in our school. This school and the teachers made my mind active. Without this school and these teachers we won't be able to study well or think well."

**Immanuel:** "When I was small I didn't even like to touch the school campus. After some years, I don't like to go out of the school because everyday I learn new things. And we share new things with others. All these things make me a wonderful man."

**Darshan:** "I joined Aikiyam School in 1st Standard. In some schools when we join as a new student we didn't

get friends but my friends became really close to me when I joined here."

**Parthiban:** "From Creche to 5th Standard I love to go to the library because if we read a book they will stick a sticker."

**Shanmugapriya:** "I like Roy very much because whenever he passed by our house he gave chocolate to me and my sister. Now that we wear uniforms I feel we are one family."

**Manjula:** "Here we have many options. I learnt dance, song and embroidery. I will miss



Grade 8 Student Performers after Romeo and Juliet

this school."

**Suresh:** "In this school we have good sports teachers and they teach me in a friendly way. I learned volleyball, swimming, and basketball."

**D. Manjula:** "I went for drawing class. Mauna appreciated my drawing. My drawing also came in a newspaper."

**Velvizhi:** "Rajan teaches us about global warming and climate change. With the help of Rajan we get lots of opportunities like going to Sadhana Forest to learn about rock climbing, making a garden and visiting many gardens."

**MISSION STATEMENT OF AIKIYAM SCHOOL (NCBS)**

Aikiyam School strives to nurture and prepare Tamil village children for life in our rapidly changing world, while maintaining contact with their Tamil language and cultural heritage, through the principles of Integral Education established by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother, Founder of Auroville, and the English medium CBSE curriculum.

**Ranjith:** "When I joined Aikiyam in 4th Standard I did not have English knowledge. We did a project called solar system. It made me very happy because it was my first English project."

**Surendar:** "This year our class learned about film and we made a small movie. I am really lucky to study in this school."

**Iyanarappan:** "I want to become a policeman. My dream about this came true when Pips told me I can be the policeman in the Romeo and Juliet drama."

All these students feel confident that they can speak and read English. The highlight of this year was the two week drama project of Romeo and Juliet. Each of the students took part to write and act in the drama. They will never forget this wonderful experience which was led by Pips, a volunteer English teacher from South Africa.

### Aikiyam Art Exhibition

One day in February the Aikiyam dining hall became a patchwork of bright colors, with every square inch of space displaying pieces of art. Posters, murals and masks swayed in the Kulilapalayam breeze, while lunch tables were covered with exquisite mandalas and detailed graphite self-portraits. Art teacher Ramalingam and Deborah Howland-Murray, a US volunteer art teacher, put together this show of student work which was the result of a two month collaborative project.



Deborah learned that, "Traditional Indian art reflects its people's profound respect for precision and perfection, vivid color and symmetrical design. This was evident in the children's drawings, which were very beautiful and conceptually literal, but not as free, individual and expressive as American children's art. Their work was also shaped by a scarcity of materials. Scarcity makes each piece of paper and each stub of pencil seem so precious that it becomes problematic for them to risk mistakes. Realizing this, I had found my niche.

I needn't mirror Ramalingam's fine technical instruction, but by virtue of my more free-wheeling American background and the supplies I provided, I could help them explore making art with increased self-expression." For Deborah, "The later projects like self-portraits provided a good barometer of how these open, trusting children had taken risks and grown. Students struggled to abandon outlines and realistically create the light and shadow they saw in their personal photographs. The art room was uncharacteristically silent as they worked."

The exhibit was the joyous celebration of some hard won victories on the part of nearly two hundred

children and two teachers who care about them.

To read more about Deborah Howland-Murray's two month experience working with Aikiyam's art teacher Ramalingam go to the Aikiyam website.



Priyadarshini with Self-Portrait

### Inauguration of Our New Building



Decorated Building,

There was great excitement at Aikiyam School on the evening of March 9th, as students and teachers gaily decorated our new building, which houses a library, science lab, and two classrooms. Colourful sarees were draped along the walls, beautiful kolams were drawn, and traditional oil lamps put in place. The next morning the students and teachers returned with fresh flowers to complete their work. Most of the funds for the new building came from the German Government, via AVI Germany.

At 11:00 on March 10th, Mrs. Christiane Cranshaw-Wachholtz, the German Consul from Chennai cut the ribbon and the building was officially opened. This was followed by friends of Aikiyam lighting a 5 feet tall 'Kuttu Vilakku' or oil lamp. There were speeches by Mrs Cranshaw, Devasmita, and Shankar, and then Aikiyam children entertained everyone with classical dances and songs. Refreshments followed.



Devasmita and Vasanthalalbai Light the Oil Lamp



Mrs. Cranshaw at Science Exhibition

Dancers and Singers

## Aikiyam Crazy Children's Circus



This successful project was presented on May 25th in front of a full school audience. 16 circus acts were performed by 20 Special Needs students from 3rd to 8th grades. The favourite acts were performed by the Famous Pyramid Builders and the Amazing Hoola Hoopers. The children also adored the Clown Acts and the Magic Acts.

## Waste Waste (Kuppai, kuppai)

...it is everywhere, says Lea, a German volunteer. Masses of it sprawled over the Indian landscape, overtaking villages. One cannot even avoid seeing piles of it covering the green space between the main road and Aikiyam School.

Many efforts have been made to improve the devastating situation in terms of solid waste and its management in the area. Right now some amounts of organic waste get composted, fed to animals or left to rot in pits in backyards. But the vast majority of all waste generated day by day is openly burned or simply dumped onto the land. This was one of the most shocking lessons I learned when I came to India.

Out of my experiences with the Litter-Free Auroville Campaign in January, the idea of an education program on waste was born. Yes, I knew all about separation and I could tell for how much a certain plastic would sell; but how would that help me? I wanted people from Kulapalayam to realize the value of waste and at the same time realize the danger of all non-valuable waste such as cheap plastic bags floating around everywhere. I had seen enough children repeating

fearfully "we should not use plastic. Plastic is bad" and buying vegetables in cheap plastic bags the minute after.

At this point Shankar luckily agreed to support and help me with the development of a program, which was finally tried out with 6th and 7th grades during the month of March.

Five sessions on different topics were held. Children applied what they learned in the five sessions and separated Aikiyam School's waste. A new place for the storage of separated waste in different barrels was set up. Four students Priyanka, Nirosha, Iyappan and Priya were given the title of 'Waste Officer' and would follow up the correct separation of the school's waste. The finale of the program were visits to the Pondicherry dump site and later to a model segregation place in Pondicherry, guided by Neranjan from Eco Pro, Auroville.

Personally I enjoyed the program so much. I felt grateful especially during the moments of sharing reality I had with the kids and to see how they showed honesty by admitting the challenge of doing ANYTHING against the practice of burning waste at home. The program I put together included many games, stories and exercises with bits and pieces of Tamil – my strategy to let learning be fun and be able to receive the kids' full attention. For many children waste is a rather boring topic. I look at it the opposite way: we can be detectives to find out where it comes from and where it goes. We can be artists finding creative ways to REUSE things.

And in the end it is all about small steps: avoid mixing of inorganic with organic waste, start composting, taking cloth bags to the store, stop buying things in small packets (for a rupee or two), washing empty milk packets and selling them off, collecting newspaper etc.

I am full of hope that the children of Aikiyam will try to do their part towards a less littered village.



Lea (19) is participating in the German "Weltwärts program" therefore volunteering for 1 year in Auroville. Her focus is environmental work.

## Aikiyam School Scholarship Fund

Students from the American School in Singapore (SAS) have been visiting Auroville for the past few years, bringing us books, school supplies and sportswear. Besides making regular donations, the programme coordinator, Mr. Rick Bisset has been thinking of other ways to help the children, and discussed some ideas with the School Support Group. One idea was to set up a Scholarship Fund to help Aikiyam School children who wish to continue their education after the 12th grade. Thanks to a generous donation from SAS we are in the process of opening a fixed deposit account with good returns for college education for deserving students.



SAS Students Bring Books



Aikiyam and SAS Students Get Acquainted

**For more photos and information about us please visit Aikiyam Website.**

## Support Us

We continue to be gratified and touched by the number of regular donations which keep flowing in. Some donations come from parents of our students and graduates of NCBS. Most come from our many friends around the world.

During the last year, our expenses exceeded our income and we used up most of our reserves. So we appeal to you to keep giving as generously as you can. We need to raise a further Rs 800 (€13 or \$18) per month per child to supplement the money that we receive from Auroville.

You can send your donation via the Auroville International Centre in your country, or send a cheque made payable to 'Auroville Unity Fund', Town Hall, Auroville, 605101 Tamil Nadu, INDIA. Please indicate clearly on an accompanying note that the donation is for Aikiyam School.

With love and gratitude  
The Aikiyam School Support Group;  
Principal Shankar, B Sullivan, Franca, Françoise, Janet  
along with Students, Teachers and Other Staff

*Dr. Heidi Watts of Antioch New England Graduate School, USA, Martin Littlewood of Auroville International UK, Satyakam Karim and Devasmita Patnaik of Auroville International France, all long time friends and supporters of the school, attend our meetings when present in Auroville.*

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