

Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends

I would like to use this newsletter as an opportunity to thank all the volunteers and teacher mentors for their precious contribution to the children's and teachers' education at Aikiyam School. Indeed their presence on campus adds special and notable essence to the entire programme. We have been helped to bring awareness about many things including child protection, waste management, music, dance, art and culture. We are very happy to share this with all our friends in order to show gratitude from the bottom of our hearts. Enjoy reading our Newsletter. Aum...Shankar



Republic Day



Left to right: Vijaya, Vanitha, Jothi, Usha, Murugan

On Republic Day we thanked four teachers who have been teaching at Aikiyam/New Creation Bilingual School for 25 years. They were presented shawls by grade 7 teacher, Vanitha, who was a kindergarten student at New Creation School, when Jothi, Murugan, Usha, and Vijaya began their careers.

Construction Update

The past year has been very challenging in terms of space and noise. Since January 2015, we have been constructing a new classroom/office building which we thought would be finished by December 2015. But of course there were many delays, and although it's nearly finished, it still needs another few months to complete. In order to make space for this building we had to tear down our old art classroom, which meant some inconvenience



The almost finished building and the foundation of the next one in relation to the science lab and library.

in terms of space, but we managed. Then in June 2015 we were informed that we would receive the Government of India Grant, which we applied for several years ago, to replace an old building which housed Grades One and Seven. Of course we were delighted, but as we have quite a small campus, it meant tearing down the building we were replacing, and crowding our students

together even more. In such a circumstance the sensible thing would be to wait until the first building was finished, before starting the second. Unfortunately this option was not available as Government of India regulations are very strict about spending the money within the allotted time frame. Otherwise we would have lost the grant altogether. We held out as long as we could, but in October we had to tear down the old building, thereby losing two classrooms. The children have lost a great deal of play space as the garden is full of building materials, but they are resilient and cheerful and do not seem to mind. We try to follow their example.



Construction materials right next to the classrooms

Focus on Grades One to Four



Teachers Grades 1 to 4 : Left to right Navarathinam (1st grade), Aruna (2nd grade), Mala (2nd grade), Nilen (3rd grade temporary), Thamizhselvi (3rd grade), Murugan (3rd grade), Simone (English and Drama 1st, 2nd, 3rd grades), Selvaraj (4th grade), Manju (1st grade), Satyavani (Supportive Learning), Jana (4th grade)

In the lower grades there are two teachers for every class, allowing each child to get the attention he or she needs. Sometimes the class is divided with one teacher working with half of the students, but most of the time both teachers work together with one presenting the lesson and the other going around the class to see which students need help.



Self Portrait by Nithyasri, 2nd grade

Adventures of Wonderland by 4th standard students assisted by class-teacher, Selvaraj, and Weltwaerts volunteer, Jana

Since we have the feeling that by giving special attention and individual care to each student's work, our 4th grade has many opportunities for new dimensions and creative work to emerge, we are proud to share the following adventure with all of you.

In our 4th grade, we had a lesson called, "Alice in Wonderland". After studying the lesson we, both students and teachers, had an idea of approaching the wonderlands differently, as Sri Aurobindo says "from near to far". Everyone had a different idea of how to make their own wonderland by using their imaginations, their dreams and their creative skills.

Firstly, they had a sharing session about their adventures and then they went for making models. After finishing them, they created their own wonderland stories with their own titles, and then they took time for practicing them and for displaying and presenting to the others. They presented their work to their schoolmates from kindergarten to 5th grade, including teachers, visitors and volunteers. During this session they had a chance to share and practice their English. Some of them shared their stories based on what they had written and some of them shared new stories through their models and pictures.

As a result, the students and the teachers received a lot of appreciation from everyone. With this the students became motivated for future projects. This work showed

their ability to work together, feeling proud of their work. Here are some of our students' expressions or sharing: Balaraman- I learned how to create stories. Abishek- I got to know the idea of what the wonderlands are. Santosh- I learned how to make models. Shakti- It gave me an opportunity of how to reuse the waste materials. Nithianandh- It helped me to use my imagination for how to make pictures. Subikshan- I understood how to present the activities to the others. Nathiya- I thought about how to make experiments. Rajesh- I had an idea of how to make designs and how to share our work. Ishaan- I was facilitated on how to help each other and work together.

Story By Priyanga

Once upon a time there was a beautiful wonderland. I, my mother, my father and my sister were in the wonderland. There was a beautiful garden in the wonderland. That garden had chocolate rivers in the mountain rivers. I had many friends in the wonderland. My friends' names are Lathika, Rajesh, Sharanidevi, Porkilai and Vithiyavathi. In my wonderland there was a lion in that beautiful garden and there was a small rabbit in a hole. That rabbit saw that lion, but the lion wanted to eat the rabbit but luckily the rabbit was running in the garden. I like my wonderland. My wonderland had beautiful flowers in it.





Story By Pokilai

Once upon a time there was a girl named Pooja. One day Pooja's sister sat under the tree. Pooja was very tired and she fell asleep and she dreamed. She saw a cat and a small kangaroo. Pooja was very afraid but the cat, the kangaroo and Pooja all became friends and they were walking a very long way and the cat got very hungry and they saw a big apple tree. They sat down and they ate the apples. The kangaroo asked Pooja "Do you know where the wonderland is?" "I don't know where the wonderland is.", the cat and the kangaroo said, "Do you want to go to the wonderland?", and Pooja answered "Yes, I want to go to the wonderland." The cat said " But on the way there are many dangerous things!"



Wonderland

A Visit to the Home of Tamizharasan, Hariharan and Uma

On a Sunday morning in January, principal, Shankar and Janet from the Support Group went to visit **Tamizharasan** and his family at their home in Periyarmudaliarchavadi on the East Coast Road. There we met mother Amirthavalli, father Suresh, grandmother Marimuthu, and sister **Uma**. Brother **Hariharan** was not at home. We sat on plastic chairs in the small hallway cum TV room of their house and chatted.

Tamizharasan is the third sibling in his family to attend Aikiyam. He is studying in the seventh grade. His favourite subject is math. He is also fond of sports. He likes the optional classes such as drawing, because there is no tension and his mind can relax. He enjoys the

activities in the waste recycling class and had a lot of fun turning old plastic bottles into dolls and puppets. He hopes, when he is older, to become a police officer, so he can change politics. He will set an example by never asking anyone for a bribe.

After completing her eighth grade at Aikiyam, Tamizharasan's sister, **Uma** went to our sister school, NESS where she graduated with a first class pass and is now in her first year in an English BA course. She has received a scholarship from an Aikiyam volunteer and another group in Auroville. Her ambition is to become an IAS (Indian Administrative Service) officer.

His brother, **Hariharan** is in his first year at NESS in the ninth grade. He is reported to be doing well, and has become more serious about his studies than he was at Aikiyam

His mother, Amirthavalli told us how much she appreciated the Aikiyam education because it was more than academic. She was glad that the children had the opportunity to draw, do clay work and to learn tailoring and carpentry. It gives them a greater variety of opportunities, she explained. Amirthavalli had to leave school after the sixth grade because her father died and she needed to help her mother, so she is happy that her children have better opportunities than she did, and that they are learning to speak English as well, as Tamil.

His father, Suresh added that many of the schools around just go through the ritual of providing education,



Uma, Tamizharasan, parents and grandmother in front of their house

and the teachers do not care about the children, and force them to memorize things, even without understanding. But, he adds, at Aikiyam the teachers and staff put their hearts and souls into the school, so the children are happy, and want to study, and do so without losing their freedom. He also appreciates the importance that Aikiyam gives to sports and swimming.

His grandmother, Marimuthu also added that she was happy with the education her grandchildren were receiving. She only went as far as grade three, when her father took her out of school because she was beaten by the teacher.

A Lovely Surprise

On December 31/15 twelve former students of Aikiyam School made a surprise visit to their old school. Their former teachers were delighted to see them and to hear what they are doing. Eleven of them are studying in various colleges and universities, including one in the UK, while the twelfth is the personal assistant to a department head in a local medical college, a job she landed because of her good English.



Front Row, left to right, Iyyanar, Vinayagamurthy, Divya Bharathi, Nithya, Shakila, Dharni, Amudhan, Saravanan,
Back Row left to right, Punitha, Amuthavalli, Rajeswari, Iyanarappan



As fifth Graders in 2006,
Amuthavalli, Nithya, Iyyanar and Iyanarappan

The students were very impressed with the new buildings and additions to the school program. Here are some of their comments:

"I was so happy to see my school after a long time. There have been a lot of changes and a new syllabus too. The school is giving wide opportunities for the nearby villages. I'm proud to be an ex-student of New Creation Bilingual School. "

"I am happy that I came back to my school to meet my ex-teachers. I didn't expect them to remember me. I am

Suresh, who works as a mason's helper, told us how they had lost their home in the 2004 tsunami, and their present house was built for them by the local *panchayat* after the tsunami. Besides the room we were sitting in, there was a kitchen, a storeroom, and a sleeping room. Grandmother did not live with them, but a few doors away with another daughter. **Uma** would sleep at night with her grandmother as there was not enough room for five of them to sleep comfortably in the house. Presently the house has no bathroom, but they hope to build one soon. As there are no public toilets nearby, they have to use a nearby coconut grove as a toilet.

proud that I studied here."

"Actually I am jealous that I didn't have this many activities when I studied. The teachers have changed the school into a successful institute. I am really happy."

"I didn't expect that I will meet all the teachers who taught us. I am very happy to see my school again. I am very proud of that I was a student of New Creation School. If I have a chance in my next birth, I will sure want to study here again. I will never forget my childhood school. I am really happy that I met my friends."



Ex-students with their former 5th grade teacher,
Vincent Raja and staff member, Jayalakshmi



Vincent Raja with students in 2006

LAST MINUTE NOTICE: The Vanaver Caravan, a professional USA dance company, recently conducted dance sessions with Aikiyam students. [Click here for the article in The Hindu](#), India's largest newspaper, regarding the students' performance.



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 indicating clearly that the donation is for Aikiyam School, or you can send it electronically by going to <http://www.auroville.com/donations/> and following the instructions.