



Newsletter

New Creation Bilingual School

Vol. 2, No.2

June 2007



Vanakkam and Welcome! Here we are again! We come to tell you how well we are doing, how the school is faring and how much we appreciate your interest and caring. As you see in the photo above, we are learning to read and write in English, and of course also in Tamil. We're getting better at it every day!

Progress

And yes, it's true, through the concerted efforts of all, the school is gradually improving. Fourteen of the seventeen 8th graders passed the government exams this year, and are able to continue their education in a recognised school. Presently we are thinking about an official recognition for NCBS itself. For the sake of the children and the potential of the school as a model of integral education for underprivileged Indian children, we are exploring the possibility of becoming an autonomous school under the Indian Government's Central Board for Secondary Education. The CBSE's philosophy, and the lively, playful materials they use, seem consistent with our

integral approach based on the principles of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

A full year..

After a year of serious of academic study, but also of fun and laughter, children's and parents' days, outings to various places in Auroville (Matrimandir, Spirulina Farm, Botanical Garden, Sadhana Forest, Discipline Farm); and the Puducherry Museum and Botanical Garden, Gingee and even the Zoo in Chennai, students and staff are now enjoying their summer holidays. A summer camp will be held on the school's premises again, with workshops, classes, work around the campus, and a two-day outing.

MISSION STATEMENT OF NCBS

The school's mission is to provide an appropriate kindergarten, primary and intermediate education to children from Kuilapalayam and other villages, which are geographically connected to Auroville, based on the principles of integral education, as defined by the founders of Auroville, the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The school strives to maintain a creative and joyful atmosphere, where the uniqueness of each child is respected and nurtured.

The school's aim is to provide a high quality bilingual education in Tamil and English, covering all of the standard academic subjects, physical education, and a wide variety of vocational options to prepare children for life in a rapidly changing world, while still maintaining contact with their Tamil cultural heritage. In the near future, children may also earn equivalency certificates so that secondary education can be continued in a school which is recognised by the Tamil Nadu Government.

New Creation Bilingual School is an Outreach day-school under the Sri Aurobindo International Institute of Educational Research (SAIER) for more than 200 children, with classes which range from pre-kindergarten to the eighth grade. All tuition, educational supplies, nutritious snacks and mid-day meals are provided free of charge.

Parent Teacher Association

On Sunday April 22nd, during an open parents' day where our students gave their very colourful best in singing and dancing which is traditionally so very highly valued in this part of the world, some fifteen parents came forward and offered to be member of the NCBS Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Such



Kuilyapalayam Panchayat President Mrs Prema Nagappan with her husband, Mr P. Nagappan at NCBS Parents' Day in April.

associations have been recognised in Tamil Nadu since 1964 and we see it as one more way to get our school on a solid footing with direct involvement from the local villagers. In this regard we were enormously pleased to note that former NCBS student, Mrs. Prema Nagappan, who is now the Panchayat President of Kuilyapalayam, the largest village nearby, expressed her willingness and happiness to be a member. Later this year, we plan to organise an all-school fair with the PTA, so as to bring parents, other Auroville schools and community members together with a day of activities.

New energy

The dynamic of the school remains strong and determined. Two Aurovilians joined the team: Nelis

(Dutch) functions as guidance counsellor, Firooza (Indian) started coaching our teachers to become more proficient in English, and newcomer Sara (Israel) helps children with special needs. At times our teachers visit other Auroville schools to observe classes there. Belgian Nicky has just left after being with us the last term and Brenda, one of Antioch's students will come here again during the summer to help the teachers better understand next year's curriculum. An occupational therapist, Matthias from Germany, will be with us for one year, and new energy also came from the Secretary of the Auroville Foundation who arranged for the repair of some of the buildings. So you see: we're going full tilt!

Teachers Residence

In January of this year Mr. Sanjeev Aggarwal and General Ashok Chatterjee of SAIER inaugurated the Teachers Residence in the Auroville 'Protection' settlement, which was built from a



Government grant. Next to a house for the Aurovilian caretaker, three long-term teachers of the school moved in with their families straightaway, along with two bachelor teachers. The two-floor building is well done, has a lovely vibration and the occupants are determined to keep it that way..



Justine

We enjoyed the presence of volunteer Justine Wilson from the '07 class at Antioch University New England this year. She writes: "NCBS is a place of smiles, laughter and learning. I enjoyed my time with the 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th standard classes, spending most of my time in the 4th where I really worked on a presentation on the human body

which included a song, debate and a drama written by the students. I also went to each student's house, where I was warmly welcomed, an amazing experience for me. To get this unique glimpse into the surrounding life styles was a truly special gift the students gave me. The people that I met at this school are such kind, caring and loving people. I felt like a staff member, having meaningful discussions about how to help students, chatting in the teachers' room, and going on the teacher's trip where I learned of the hidden dancing talents of various teachers. I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to enjoy, laugh and work so closely with this school and staff. You hold a place in my heart." Thank you, Justine!

Support Group

The New Creation Bilingual School Support Group (SG) is an administrative body responsible for seeing that the mission statement for NCBS is fulfilled (see page 1). Except for the Principal, all its members do the work for NCBS in addition to their regular jobs. The group became active in the school in January 2005 and its present members are, from left to right:



Francoise Corbel (French), Aurovilian since 1986, has 20 year experience in school administration, and teaching, is active as teacher trainer and educational consultant. **Franca Crocetti** (Italian), qualified teacher with a PhD in Education from the University of Bologna, in Auroville since '84 and involved in the school from its early years until around 1991. **Suriyagandhi** (Indian), Aurovilian since 1989, co-executive of and practicing nurse at the Auroville Dental Clinic, active as the school's accountant. **S. Shankar** (Indian), Principal, Aurovilian since 1994, with a Master's degree in Tamil, second language teacher training from the University of Mysore, at times teaches Tamil language & culture at the University of Washington in USA. **Janet Fearn** (Canadian), in Auroville since 1968, experience in Auroville's administration and running a handicrafts' workshop and a guesthouse. **Mauna van der Vlugt** (Dutch), Aurovilian since 1977, qualified teacher with wide range of Auroville experience, including Auroville International coordination, Press Liaison, and Auroville Webmaster.

Heidi

Professor Heidi Watts has been a well known and much appreciated presence in Auroville since the early nineties, supporting, inspiring, mentoring and advising those Aurovilians who work in the field of children's education for Auroville and the surrounding villages. After retiring in 1993 from her position as co-chair of the Education Department at Antioch University New England, in New Hampshire, USA, Heidi was able to come to Auroville for 2-3 months each winter because of support from USA-based Foundation for World Education. It was with her help that NCBS's Support Group was formed in January 2005.



Heidi writes: *"When I first came to Auroville, I almost immediately got totally involved with NCBS. I loved the enthusiasm of the teachers and their willingness to try anything. I loved the happy, eager faces of the children. I loved the opportunity to share my thoughts and experiences with these non-Western teachers, and I have been returning to New Creation in the capacity of visiting consultant, teacher trainer, guide and friend ever since. A number of teachers from the school have participated in the Antioch New England/Auroville exchange programme and many new graduates from the Antioch teacher-training programme have worked at NCBS. Presently the curriculum at the school has changed from being largely rote memorising and drill to more*

interactive, student-centred activities, and we spend more time on policy and professional issues such as plans for assessment, curriculum development, standards for children and teachers, teacher renewal, and networking with other Auroville schools. It's very interesting to see it all grow and the New Creation community remains a rich source of personal and professional friendships for me." Heidi's recurring presence and continuing support remain a true blessing for NCBS, and all of us are extremely grateful for this.

Murugan (see photo page 2)

After all our historic overviews in previous newsletters, we now hope to return to the regular feature of introducing you to our teachers. We pick up the thread with Murugan, a friendly young Aurovilian man in his forties, who lives with his wife and two children in adjacent New Creation Field, and has been working in NCBS since 1989. For more than 8 years he also actively participated in the teachers' Core group. Murugan says: *"I am specialised in using Math resources for the lower group and have this year been teaching in 4th standard, where we did a very good 'Human Body' project with Justine from Antioch. Teaching is a difficult job especially as we teach rural children who don't receive much support from their parents. I am learning every day along with the children and learned a lot from the many resource people visiting the school. Even though our children generally come from a poor background, they are happy here. We forget our problems by seeing their smiling faces, which form a special feature of our school."*



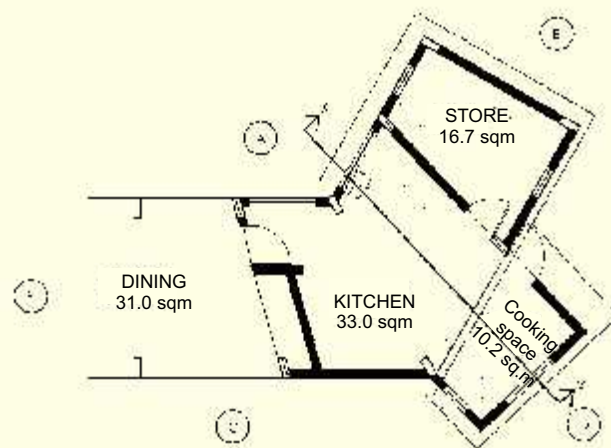
The temporary make-shift cooking arrangement under the Banyan trees.

Good news..!

You may remember from an earlier newsletter that due to financial constraints we had to stop cooking on gas and hence erected a make-shift hut near the Banyan trees in order to cook on a wood fire. The situation was, certainly from a hygienic standpoint, far from ideal, but the fact is that all our milk, eggs, chickpeas, rice, pulses and vegetables were prepared, boiled, chopped and cooked in an open area, for eagerly awaited mid-morning snacks, nutritious mid-day meals, and sturdy ragi-malt porridge after sports before going home.

Now, because of the financial and personal concern and support of two long-term friends, this situation can change and we are ever so thankful for this. After conferring with one of Auroville's architects, our friends pledged Rs 10 lakhs (approx €18,000, or \$24,500, or £12,000), which is half of the combined construction cost for the kitchen complex and some repairs to the existing school buildings, on the condition that it be matched. Later, most of the repairs were covered by the Auroville Foundation and some money for the kitchen has already come in, so we have dared to start off..

In case you could help us complete the matching grant for the new kitchen complex..



.. you can send your donation via the Auroville International Centre in your country, or send a cheque made payable to 'Auroville Unity Fund', and send it to 'Auroville Unity Fund', Town Hall, Auroville, 605101 Tamil Nadu, INDIA. Please indicate clearly, on an accompanying note if needed, that the donation is for New Creation Bilingual School.

If you wish to suggest other arrangements, get in touch with us via ncbssg@auroville.org.in.

Thank you, once again, for being with us in this venture!

The New Creation Bilingual School Support Group,

Principal Shankar, and Franca, Françoise, Janet, Mauna, Suriyagandhi, and Core group members, along with all the school's children, teachers, other personnel and friends.

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

New Creation Bilingual School, New Creation, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, INDIA
 email: ncbssg@auroville.org.in; phone: +91 (413)-2622358 or +91 (0)9443860106
www.auroville.org/education/village_schools/newcreation_bilingual.htm