

Vanakkam Aikiyam Friends,

I am very happy once more to share what is going on at Aikiyam School on behalf of the Children, Staff and the Support Group. Aikiyam children went again this year to Uttarakhand in the North, and Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu for the summer camps organized by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Delhi and Auroville Nature Camp team respectively.

Aikiyam is also glad to tell you that we have added new programmes like Nature Art and Solid Waste Awareness to our activities. As it is the beginning of the academic year, many new toddlers have joined our pre-creche. As usual we received more applications from parents than we are able to admit to Aikiyam, and sadly had to turn some children away. We are also happy to let you know that we have demolished two substandard classrooms, and are about to begin construction of new classrooms thanks to two generous donations for this purpose. The office is filled with the smell of new books and the smiles on the faces of our students give us the joy and the energy to approach the new school year with the expectation of many successes..... Many thanks for being with us... Shankar



*During birthday week, children from several Auroville and outreach schools, including Aikiyam spent a day picking up the garbage lying around Kuilapalayam. Aikiyam students were very proud to read about the event on March 1, 2014 in one of Indian's most widely-read English-language newspapers, **the Hindu**. We reproduce the article here.*

School students tidy Kuilapalayam as part of Auroville's birthday celebrations (the Hindu)

Auroville celebrated its 46 birthday on Friday. There were many of the usual celebrations, including the early morning bonfire and a meditation in the evening at the Matri Mandir.

In addition, this year the students of the various schools in Auroville decided to give something back to society by organising a massive clean up at Kuilapalayam.

Auroville's birthday is normally an occasion to remember The Mother and be grateful for what she has done for society. This year, we thought we would do something different and clean up Kuilapalayam. Following weeks of planning, the



I Love to Clean



Shankar speaking to the children as they prepare for clean-up in Kuilapalayam

cleanup event took shape, one of the volunteers said.

The programme started off at 7 in the morning, with a large group of students from the New Era Secondary School, Aikiyam, TLC, and other students assembling at Marc's Café.

The group then proceeded to pick up garbage from around the area. The exercise drew so much attention from the crowd that several people on bikes and cars stopped and helped the volunteers clean up the area.

"Although many of the shops and organisations around Kuilapalayam take care to keep their surroundings clean, with the increasing number of people coming in to the area, the garbage has increased in recent years. This cleanup was just the starting point, with many more events being planned in the future to help raise awareness on the need for cleanliness," Selvaraj Damotharan from NESS said.

Earlier, I didn't care about garbage either and was very careless about how I used plastics, but now that I have learnt the problems that plastics and other non-biodegradable plastics create, I am very careful. I want the rest of the society to realise what they are doing. The rest of the students who were involved in the exercise will be meeting on Saturday to try and come up with an action plan to clean up the surroundings on a regular basis, Murugaveni one of the students said.

The group are also planning a bigger event for Independence Day, but the details of what they will be doing are still being sorted out, Kavitha, an organiser said.

Volunteers

Volunteers are an important part of life in Aikiyam. They are especially appreciated for speaking to the students only in English, which means our students can't just slip into Tamil because it's easier, as they often do with their regular teachers. Most volunteers stay between one and four months, but each year we have one or two Weltwaerts volunteers from Germany, who stay for a full year, and become an integral part of the "Aikiyam family". Luise and Chris have been with us for almost a year.

Luise: The last ten months in Auroville's Aikiyam School have been a wonderful experience. I enjoy working with the children, first in second and now in third grade. I spend the entire school-day with them, assisting with all of the subjects except for Tamil. One week ago I started giving English lessons to fifth grade completely on



my own; a big challenge, but a lot of fun! In the beginning it was challenging to teach children with a completely different cultural background, speaking an unfamiliar language. But with time, and help from all of the great staff, I learned, and now I feel I am part of the school.

Chris: For me Aikiyam means a chance - a chance for the children to learn something, to develop their skills, and to just be children; a chance for the staff to teach in many different ways that they consider to be important, and to change what they consider in need of change. And it is an incredible chance for me; a chance to learn from these children how they view life, to learn about Tamil culture and language, and to compare all this to what I know from where I grew up; therefore a great chance to learn about myself. Thank you for that!



Partnership Story Project

Professor Jean Eisele from the University of Washington at Bothell in the USA has been mentoring the teachers of Aikiyam School for many years, and has connected teachers in the Seattle area with the Aikiyam teachers through various projects.

One of these projects is the 'Partnership Story Project'. Laila Kabani's students from Woodinville

Montessori School, Bothell, Washington did the project with Shankar's students at Aikiyam.

The fourth, fifth and sixth grade students from Bothell wrote the first part of a story, and sent it to the sixth grade partner students at Aikiyam, along with illustrations.



Illustrations from "The People of the Core" co-authored by students of Woodinville Montessori School in the USA and Aikiyam School in India

The Aikiyam students read the story, discussed it in small groups, making sure they understood its meaning, and thought about an ending. Then they completed the story along with their own drawings. Laila K then compiled and formatted the book and sent a hard copy to each student.

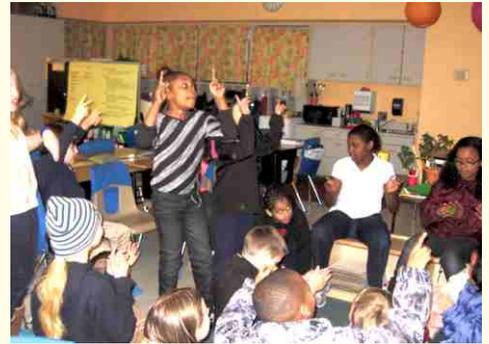
The highlights of the project for the Aikiyam students were:

1. The skype conference at 10:00 pm. Aikiyam students had a pot luck dinner in school and then waited for the school day to begin in Seattle. Aikiyam children could hardly believe it when they



Skype call

saw the children in Seattle starting their school day when it was late at night in India. They shared many things, such as singing, dancing, showing their traditional dresses and exchanging questions and answers. It was such fun to watch the whole process of their group meeting, how they shared ideas, used their imaginations, and came to a consensus.



Woodinville students having fun during skype call

2. The joy and pride felt by each child when actually receiving his/her very own copy of the partnership story book.

Aikiyam students participate in the NIRMITproject, land-art in Auroville's Botanical Gardens

During the last year Ishta, the founder of NIRMITproject, has been guiding children into discovering the creative world with minimum of materials and interference, and the results are quite amazing

Ishta says: NIRMITproject is an approach to art in Nature using what Nature gives, but also a spiritual approach to the vision of our deeper being with the

Divine. Contact with Nature allows the innate qualities of the children to remain clear and creative in the way of "free progress". This ephemeral Art develops the creation of the "here and now", avoiding the desire for possession related to his/her own creation. Creation is Universal and free from attachment. The Botanical Gardens and I were delighted to share these moments of joy and creation with Aikiyam school students.



Science Exhibition

Under the guidance of Science teacher Radhakrishna and with the help of drawing, clay and carpentry teachers, students from classes V to VIII presented a science exhibition on 26th January 2014. The students showed their work to the other students, teachers, visitors and their parents, and explained the motivation and inspiration behind their work. The visitors asked questions, and praised the work of the students.

Here are some excerpts from the students:

"I am very glad to share my experiences from our science project that we had done. It is a good project and we also learned many general knowledge facts from that project which are very important for our general growth. We made some practical experiments and some models about our human body. We learned more about electricity pressure, humans etc." *Sathiyamoorthi*

"We made so many models of human parts, magnetic forces, jumping frog, hydraulic pressure etc. We made some book markings like the life cycles of frog and rat. I am very happy to share with others. And

this could help me in my future. Some of our students made diagrams of human eye, our heart, structure of our teeth etc. So many foreigners and other people came to visit our science project. They asked questions and I told many details. And I was very happy." *S. Rajesh*

"In this exhibition we placed the diagrams of the floras and fauna what we had seen in the Mudumalai sanctuary. We also made charts of metamorphosis in frogs, mosquito, hen, butterfly and silk moth. We made models of the microbes. And also we drew hyena, wild dogs, sea breeze and land breeze. And some diagrams of the human circulatory system, digestive system, human heart, human eye, human kidney, human tongue, alveoli, battery cell, human brain, jigger, peacock, goat. We also stuck in some picture of us." *Pachaiyappan*

"I draw many pictures for the exhibition like, hyena, cow, scorpion, parts of flowers and different kinds of blood. We have learnt how the various parts of our body are working and the things that we want to take in and to avoid etc. We all do this with the help of our science teacher and other sirs." *Sivakumar*



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 auroville.com/donations/ and following the instructions.

**Aikiyam School, New Creation, Auroville 605101, Tamil Nadu, INDIA. e-mail: assg@auroville.org.in;
ph: +91 (413)-2622358 or +91 (0)8940193339;
Our newsletters from 2006 onwards can be read online at:
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