

### **Vanakkam from all of us to You!**

What a pleasure to share the joy experienced by the children and staff of Aikiyam School because of our renovated campus. Aikiyam children keep discovering new ways of using their expanded classrooms. As in previous years, we have way more applications for admission than Aikiyam can hold. The quality of the education passed another milestone with our newly introduced Awareness Through the Body programmes. We also have a new computer programme and restructured special need programmes.

A large donation after our appeal in 2008 is now used up. We can manage for the next three months, but after that . . .? On behalf of the children, we appeal to you

for your continuing support and 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 that the donation is for Aikiyam School.

With love and gratitude from the Aikiyam School Support Group;

Principal Shankar, B, Franca, Françoise, Janet, Satyakam along with Students, Teachers and Staff



### **Summer Renovations Create Beautiful School Buildings**

When the students and teachers of Aikiyam School came back from their summer vacation, they were amazed to see the art room and all but two of their grades one to seven classrooms refurbished. The rooms were light and the air circulated freely between the big new windows and wide doors. Everyone agreed that it was a total miracle. To have achieved so much in only three months was quite unbelievable. Everything, except the roof, has been replaced. No one wanted to alter the original famous and much-loved "space ship" design, so the builders cleverly replaced the bulky inside walls of

the classrooms with thinner ones to create space.

The German Government, to whom we already owe so much gratitude for our new library and science building, which we now call Pragathi, (meaning "progress" in Sanskrit) along with friends from Auroville International Germany made this transformation of our beloved school possible. We thank them so much. Their generosity has made such a difference to our school life.

Dianna

#### **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.

## Introducing two of our new teachers at Aikiyam



Swapna and Vanitha

### Swapna

I feel proud that I am in this Aikiyam society. As a student, I did not get any chance to express my ideas and talents. But here, I am happy to see that the children are given the opportunity to express themselves in many ways. Most schools do not allow their students to be involved in extra-curricular activities. They want the children to concentrate only on studies, but here the children are so skillful in all activities and more energetic too.

In Aikiyam, I find the teachers to be punctual for their classes and very friendly with their children. Even the old tradition of teacher/student relationship is totally changed. In my observation, the students are responsible. They keep their environment clean, even when they were taken on a field trip. I saw the children picking up plastic without the instructions of any teacher.

Here, slow learners are taken care by the special needs group. In Aikiyam, every child is given importance. This is the only school where I found a special needs programme for slow learners. Almost all the needs of the students are being fulfilled here. Even the office administration is very friendly. Nowadays, I am gaining lots of new experiences like writing lesson plans before entering the class, conducting a meeting once in a week, assessing the students through their activities, doing classroom level projects and testing children's knowledge in academic subjects.



Special needs student

### Vanitha:

I am Vanitha teaching mathematics at Aikiyam. I have completed my B.Sc.,(Mathematics), and B.Ed. I am teaching mathematics for special needs children. I am happy to be part of the special needs team. I feel proud to be in Aikiyam because once I was a student here. I am really enjoying my profession and working with the children.

## US Consul Visits Aikiyam

In July, US Consul Tonya Gendin visited Aikiyam for a discussion about the difficulty for teachers with Indian passports to obtain a visa to attend teacher training programmes in the US. The US Consulate has to screen the huge volume of applicants who apply for visas in India. Aurovilians normally do not meet the strict criteria which have now increased with new security measures that have been introduced.

Auroville is fortunate to have the benefits of great friends in the United States who have supported the schools in so many ways. Two of them are Heidi Watts from Antioch University New England and Jean Eisele from the University of Washington. They have very generously arranged programmes for teacher training together with the Foundation for World Education. Our teachers have so substantially benefited from these programmes that to now have the visa obstacle prevent participation . . . well, we had to do something.

Two American Aurovilians, Jill and B, helped to arrange this visit so something could be done about the problem. Fortunately, the US Consul responded very favorably to our request and sent this delegation down from the Consulate in Chennai. Consul Gendin was most sympathetic and gave us guidelines and suggestions on how the process could have a successful outcome for the applicant and for the requirements of the Consulate.

## Awareness through the body

For two years, I have been working as an Awareness Through the Body (ATB) teacher in Nandanam School and in the Centre Field Kindergarten. Since July 2009, I have been a support therapist for the children in Aikiyam's special needs programme. This new school year, I felt the importance of introducing ATB classes in the A i k i y a m kindergarten. I know from experience how children can benefit from these essential activities for their learning process and for their personal development.



Rock climbing at Nainital

The activities basically assist their need for body movement and self-expression. At this age, it's important to develop sensory integration and body

awareness through listening for meaning, self control, attention, coordination and motor skills exercises. These are pre-requisites and foundations for the further learning development.

The activities are in a game like form so the children easily enter into them. With a playing approach, using fantasy, curiosity and creativity, they discover, experience and practice new skills which will help them with their further developmental stages.

As Tamil is their first language, I was worried that they would have difficulty to understand my instructions, but what I realized is how fast they could pick up new words and get use to the English words because they are learning it through games.

Since I started these ATB classes, the children are responding so well. They are happy to come because I am "the teacher of the play" for them. Other teachers report how the children are full of enthusiasm, looking



Velvizhi is crossing the canyon in Nainital Camp

rock climbing. Before going on that trip, I did rock climbing in the Auroville canyons with our teacher Rajan. That made it easier for me to do rock climbing in Nainital. We made treks of five to sixteen km in those cold mountains.

Still, I can hardly believe that I went to Delhi and beyond Delhi, even after my return. It is like a dream. I never went out of Tamil Nadu state before, and it was the first time I went for such a long distance.

I felt very bad that I did not know the Hindi language. I met boys and girls from different parts of India.

I thank AIKIYAM for giving this chance to me.



Awarenes through the body class

forward the next class. They have also noticed the benefit in their own classroom. The children are more able to listen for meaning; their attention span is increasing as well as their capacity to interact in a harmonious way with the group.

So what's the next step? My wish for the future is to extend Awareness through the body activities to the children of all the other grades.

*Stefania*

**During the summer holidays this year, the seventh graders went to Kodai and the eighth graders went to Nainital.**

### **Velvizhi**

Hi, my name is Velvizhi. Now, I am in the 9th grade in New Era Secondary School, Auroville. During the school holidays after finishing 8th grade at Aikiyam, our class went on a trip to Nainital via Delhi.

In Delhi, I saw wonderful, famous, and important places like the Taj Mahal, the Red fort, Gandhi's tomb, etc. I have never thought that I would ever go to the Taj Mahal or to any places around Delhi.

When I went to the Nainital camp, I felt happy, but also cold. There I did many activities like traveling and



A vegetable seller is reading the handout on global warming given by Manikandan

write, and give pictorial pamphlets to villagers who could read.

It was a great opportunity for the students because they need to articulate well what ever they want to communicate to the villagers. From their home experience, our students understand about the problems of villagers who live away from towns and cities. Our children appreciated the hospitality shown by the rural people along their route. People listened to them and encouraged them in what they were doing.

### **Kodai Summer Camp by Ganesh and Iyappan**

*During the summer holidays this year, the seventh graders went to Kodai and the eighth graders went to Nainital.*

Our 7th grade class went to Kodaikanal. It was very nice. We enjoyed everything there. We traveled by bus to Villupuram and traveled on a train to Kodai Road. Again we traveled by bus up into the mountains.

In Kodaikanal, we trekked for two days. We were very happy. We played 'Ropeway'. That game was very hard for us but we liked it. We went in sauna before swimming. It was very hot in there. Then we went to a river and swam in the river. We made many new friends there. We played games every evening in a place called 'green land'. We came to the tents after our trekking and played games like Uno.

In the afternoon, we played badminton. We had meetings before going to bed. There were interesting games and activities in the meeting hall. We also shared about our experiences during the meeting. Sometimes we collected firewood for our cooking. It was a great experience. Kodaikanal is an interesting place. We enjoyed our stay with other school children who came to the camp with us.

### **Friday outings in Sadhana Forest by Special Needs Teacher, Mala**

Aikiyam participates in the Children's Land Project with Anna and Tiago at Sadhana Forest on Fridays for 2.5 hours. After a month, we decided to keep this programme going continuously. Special needs children from class 5, 6, 7 and 8 are eagerly joining in this programme. Actually, all the children are enjoying it and learning through this programme. Kuppan from the 8th grade, who has always been difficult to manage, suddenly is in "full bloom" expressing himself and contributing in all the activities. The transportation is shared between Aikiyam and Sadhana Forest.



Mulching the ground in Children Land in Sadhana forest

Activities of our children in Children's Land:

1. Learning songs in different languages
2. Planning and brain-storming about Children's Land
3. Making a circle garden
4. Playing orientation games
5. Having a mud bath in the end
6. Sharing our children's work with a school in London through painting and drawing
7. Volcano method planting (a very good technique for all types of soil).
8. Caring , loving and respecting nature

Some outcomes from the Children's Land programme

1. Skills in organizing work
2. Sharing and helping each other
3. Learning life skills
4. Responsibility
5. Mingling with people of different nationalities

All our outings so far have been a great success!



A first grader having a real blow out.

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

*Dr. Heidi Watts of Antioch New England Graduate School, USA, and Martin Littlewood of Auroville International UK, attend our meetings when present in Auroville.*

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