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NEW LEARNING CENTRE, ALL ABOARD !

After 14 years operating Thamarai in temporary spaces it's a dream come true watching the new learning centre rise up from the ground in Annai Nagar under the careful guidance of Raman architects and the local construction team. It's a three stage project that will provide a sports ground and learning centre to host after school services for children and adult education to this rural community. The land has been given by Auroville for the development of activities that contribute to the well being of the village.

It is an inside out development where the local community are actively envisaging and contributing to the centre. Village elders have been involved in clearing and preparing the site and children and youth with idea generation, the first planting and site inauguration. The upcoming summer camp will be dedicated to the involvement of children in shaping parts of the new project. The site is a long narrow strip. The first 40 metres is now being developed leaving 160

metres for future initiatives. As well as creating a learning space our students have many other ideas such as planting fruit trees, building a tree house and creating a play area for the smaller children.

The development will transform this ground to a multi purpose sports area that aspires to promote peace and



gender equality through sports and full potential through an education facility that will increase literacy and opportunity through homework support, language, digital literacy and health education programs.

The project has been developed with a strong environmental commitment in working with the use of ● ● ●

THAMARAI PROFILE

After-school

The two after-school programmes work on the overall holistic development of children with various components such as languages, arts and culture, science, digital literacy, leadership interwoven while also being a facility to support the children with their homework and coursework.

Well-being

Health and well-being programmes empower people through yoga, primary healthcare and mindful nutrition. We have also established a support service for patients of alcohol addiction with help of experienced counsellors.

Leadership and Capacity Development
Children, youth and adults are fostered to discover their value-based leadership skills and competencies and see themselves as agents of change.

Playgroup

The playgroup envisions to provide a thriving, safe environment for pre-school children. We have 36 children, age 2-3 years old. All playgroup children are assured a place for further education in Udavi School.

HAPPY WEEKENDS IN THAMARAI

In October :

- Linda offered a yoga class and taught the children the practice of compassionate breath.
- Helen and Mathilde came to do laughing yoga and a workshop on emotions and happiness.
- and Tomoko provided an origami workshop.

In November :

- Omi, a therapist from the United States offered us art therapy. We danced with our two hands on big sheets of paper with paint while listening to music.

In December :

- We had the chance to welcome clowns without borders from Switzerland. They played music, did acrobatics and made us laugh a lot!
- We also danced with Irena, learned puppetry from Mireille and heard wonderful stories from Dilip.
- and Shruthi enthralled us with Veena (an Indian string instrument)

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all our friends at home and around the world, to our well wishers, our volunteers and all those who have come to our centres to say hello, give their time, support and special classes.

We are grateful for the financial help, materials and office/classroom space that we continually receive which creates an enabling environment for us. With gratitude that together we are making a difference.

● ● ● open building design and exposed brick walls to reduce the use of cement, some reusable materials and incorporating small projects close to



the children's hearts such as rain water catchment and garden and tree cultivation. We plan to have stage 1 (a ground floor classroom with a roofed open verandah area) opened in June 2020 and follow shortly after with the second floor and remainder of the sports ground. Fundraising is ongoing to support this dream. If you would like to get involved with us www.thamarai.org

-Bridget

FRIEND RAISING EVENT

A year ago, Thamarai had hosted a beautiful volunteer driven fund raiser over lunch at the visitors center. It was an incredibly rich experience of goodwill, gratitude and generosity as many heads, hands and hearts came together to co create a heart warming experience for all.

Though there was a small exchange of money from guests to take care of practical costs of arranging lunch, what emerged was the incredible untapped wealth of volunteer energy, community support, fresh ideas and new energy that came into Thamarai from that event. Many of the people who attended the event stayed in touch and over time have become dear friends and supporters of our work.

Diwali, being a celebration of light (with-in) and Indian new year, we were wondering how to honour all our friends and supporters over the years. We felt it would be awesome to recreate the luncheon get together as it was so delightful for all who participated.

However we felt called to experiment with gift culture, a shift in consciousness from seeing the event as a friend raiser instead of a fund raiser. We all decided to make it a price-less event, with people welcome to contribute in any way their heart is moved.

The staff members of Thamarai decided to prepare a traditional meal using materials locally sourced. Instead of going to the market, we requested the local farms in Auroville to share with us their



produce at subsidised cost. This and so many other creative ideas allowed us to keep the costs to a minimum and yet offer the highest quality of love and attention to detail.

Come October 25th, the venue of the lunch was transformed with kolams, flowers and bright colored fabrics. The volunteers and some of our children came out in their finest celebration clothes to welcome the guests and the new year. As each guest came in, the surprise and delight at being received into such a welcoming space was reflected on their faces. Conversely, each volunteer felt uplifted with each of the guests' smiles too, making all their heart work worth it.

As the day progressed, the joy-o-meter in the space seemed to keep rising, reflected in the smiles, laughter and delight of all. There was an incredible variety of food for the senses and even more for the soul.

All in all it was an uplifting event and we hope some of that can be transferred to the readers.

-Sheetal



STUDENTS' CORNER

AN EVENING WITH BHARATHIYAR

Thamarai children experienced the life of Bharathiyar, a great figure of Tamil culture, using theatre, recitation, music, dance (folk & classical), videography, etc. Here is what the children thought of it...



Bharat Nivas is a peaceful place and a lovely auditorium. In the play, Bharathiyar's story was described very clearly.

The man who played his role acted like Bharathiyar lived his whole life. I liked the script very much and I didn't feel it was just a play. I saw Bharathiyar live his own life in front of my eyes.

Through the play they presented his songs and poems. This is the place where I learned about Bharathiyar's whole story.

-Rajan, Age 14, Grade 9



We had the great opportunity to visit Bharat Nivas. First we were sitting in a circle to sing Bharathiyar's songs, sang by different school children. After that we had a little snack.

The story which they played was interesting and all the actors played very well.

When I read a story in a book I can't understand it well but if I see it as a visual

then I understand. I learned a lot from this drama.

I liked the songs, the acting and the dances, especially when he said a poem and passed away, I was so touched. Bharathiyar's wife expected that he would buy jewels from the shop but he bought a whole vehicle of books, this was so interesting for me.

-Nithish Kumar, Age 14, Grade 9



Bharathiyar is a true person, he wrote many books and songs. In the play, the actor sang and at the same time the girls danced classical dance. I liked that dance very much. And the man who played Bharathiyar's role was played very well. I learned how helpful Bharathiyar was.



-Harini, Age 10, Grade 5

PORTRAIT



I joined Thamarai as a volunteer last month. I am a musician born in Italy and currently living in Greece, where I started exploring music and other forms of artistic expression as tools for social change through individual and collective awareness.

Working with children is an intense, magical experience. During my first weeks as a facilitator I had some challenging times, finding myself in a new country, surrounded by a new culture, facing a different educational system and the language gap. The supportive, welcoming and careful team of Thamarai helped me directly and indirectly: it is a big self growing experience to observe (and absorb!) how the "elder" facilitators manage to create a stimulating learning environment through smiles, encouragements, support, advise. Nevertheless, the most significant help arrived from the children themselves, thanks also to the safe, open-minded environment created at Thamarai: ultimately, they are the ones teaching me how to connect with them, through sharing and exchanging ideas, emotions and energies.

While during the week I have been working as a facilitator at Annai Nagar and Edyanchavadi's after school, at the week-end I have been holding a series of Community Music activities with the support of the other facilitators. Through rhythms, movements, melodies and lyrics, these workshops aim to create a safe space where the children

... can creatively express themselves, getting connected with their individuality and their shared community. Delivering a workshop requires the ability of adapting a set design to the energies of the group. The most satisfying and enriching feeling comes from embracing any suggestion that the children might give consciously or unconsciously, in order to support them becoming sharing individuals and eventually leaders themselves... giving them the chance to blossom like lotus flowers.

I am looking forward to continue this deep learning experience, with the big beautiful family of Thamarai who welcomed me as one of them.

-Lisa

THAMARAI FILM FESTIVAL STARS



Thamarai children arrived at the Auroville Town hall on January 12th for the 6th Auroville Film Festival to the surprise of seeing themselves on posters that covered the walls outside the cinema venue. They were the movie stars, directors and camera people of 13 wonderful films that they crafted with the support of Yatra Arts and Media and the Stewardship for New Emergence team.

The children were mentored through a 1-year leadership, project design and film-making program based on the issues they want to solve in their communities. Topics close to the children's hearts emerged as themes for the movies such as creating peace by reducing alcohol consumption through sports, waste management, saving water and trees and cultivating respect. This visit was a joyful finale to a project that brought many happy moments as well as a wonderful learning opportunity. Sincere thanks to Yatra Arts and Media and the Stewardship Team for their professionalism and guidance and the Auroville 50th fund for support.

-Bridget

ELEA ARCHITECTURE WORKSHOP IN EDAYANCHAVADY

This year has been really a great beginning for us in Thamarai. It is great pleasure for us to have so many heads and hearts involved in the project and co-creating with us. One such creation is the new after-school facility which is currently functioning in the Edayanchavady village which is located in the bio-region of Auroville and also part of the experimental community called Anitya (Joy of Impermanence). The initial



structure was built by a group of volunteers who were part of a bamboo workshop a year ago and since then so many people have contributed

to build this space, we now have 25 children coming everyday to study with us and learn together. The recent activity was another workshop where 50 architecture students came together to learn and build with bricks and bamboo and learned different construction techniques. The children from the village also participated enthusiastically to build their learning space. It was a great learning experience for the architecture students and the kids.

-Vignesh

CELEBRATING PONGAL

We celebrated Pongal festival (A traditional Tamil harvest festival) event in our Annai nagar after school on 13th January 2020. First our children introduced Pongal, the Tamil traditional harvest festival, where the farmers wish gratitude to the sun, the earth, the water and the cows. In total, 90 children and some of their parents partici-



pated. Our children performed cultural activities like Silambam martial art, Kollattam (a stick dance) and classical dance. We also conducted games with the children, facilitators, and parents with great pleasure. We ended eating sweet pongal and sugarcane and the children went back to their homes full of happiness and joy.

-Jagadeshwari

BE PART OF OUR ADVENTURE

If you wish to be part of Thamarai or contribute in our activities please visit the "Get involved" page on our website (www.thamarai.org) or send us an e-mail at thamarai@auroville.org.in.

Become our ambassador and help us promote our projects to your friends and community.

Find Thamarai Educational Projects on Facebook, Youtube and Instagram to connect with us!