

Thanjavur projects gain steam Foundation stone laid for senior citizens home



R Sathiamoorthy, AGM, Petrofac Ltd unveiling the plaque at the site of Sevalaya's Gandhi Ashram Krishnan Memorial Senior Citizens Home at Thanjavur

The foundation stone for "Sevalaya's Gandhi Ashram Krishnan Memorial Senior Citizens Home " at Thanjavur was laid on 22nd January 2018 by R Sathiamoorthy, AGM, Petrofac Ltd which is sponsoring the construction of the building. K Muthuramakrishnan, Advisor, Sevalaya

has donated around 4000sq ft ground in Thalavaipalam, D S Nagar, Nagapattinam Road, for construction of an old age home, in fond memory of his father 'Gandhi Ashram' Krishnan. The Home has been named after his father.

He said Petrofac was delighted to participate in this noble initiative of caring for senior citizens. He promised the continued support of the organisation in future endeavours of Sevalaya.

A S Sundar Raj, Senior Divisional Manager, LIC, Thanjavur and Rtn MPHFN Subramanian participated in the function.

Sevalaya Murali, in his address thanked Petrofac which is headquartered in Sharjah, to have come forward to help the greater cause of destitute senior citizens in Thanjavur district. Sevalaya Murali recalled that Gandhi Ashram Krishnan was an ardent freedom fighter and a close associate of Rajaji. He was managing Tiruchengode Gandhi Ashram for a long time. He served two terms in jail while participating in India's freedom movement.

"It is a matter of great privilege to open a home named after such a great martyr and in his fond memory" he mentioned.

Free breakfast scheme gathers momentum in Thanjavur 700 high school students get free daily breakfast

The New Year dawned with the extension of Sevalaya's free breakfast scheme to 700 more underprivileged students of Government Girls Higher Secondary School, Palace Campus, Thanjavur preparing for their Board exams, for 4 months from January 2018 to April 2018. Sevalaya, has, for the past year, been providing free breakfast to 150 students of 4 primary schools in Thanjavur on all school days.

The genesis of this program came from Swami Vivekananda who emotively said that God comes in the form of a Roti to a hungry person. Sevalaya firmly believes that when hunger is appeased, the focus of the students automatically shifts to their studies. Although the scheme is



A S Sundar Raj, Senior Divisional Manager, LIC, Thanjavur serving breakfast to the students of govt higher secondary school, Thanjavur

still in its infancy, the headmistresses from all the schools have reported better attendance and the attendance,

concentration levels and academic performance of the students have improved.

Inaugurating the programme, A S Sundar Raj, Senior Divisional Manager, LIC of India, Thanjavur mentioned that hunger is a major cause of dropouts in schools and once this is addressed, there is an automatic turnaround in the students attitude towards studies. He hoped that this programme will catch on and many schools in Thanjavur and elsewhere will benefit from such schemes.

Sevalaya's outlay for this programme in ₹ 12 lacs currently. Sevalaya hopes to consistently provide this facility to the students on all school days.

Joy of giving: *the way of life*

Dear Friends,

Sarapanancheeri is a sleepy village, just outside Padappaai, in Kanchipuram district, in Tamil Nadu with almost zero population and only dry vacant land stretching out as far as one can see.

As the city expands, we need broad roads, metro railway lines, flyovers, bridges etc. When expansion work takes place, huts are removed from roadside and they need alternate accommodation. Many people had put up unauthorized huts on the banks of famous Coovam river which were washed away during 2015 floods. These people also needed alternative accommodation.

For some reason, the Government of Tamil Nadu decided to build houses in Sarapanancheeri village and move the hut dwellers from city to that village. 2300 houses were constructed and gifted to people dislocated due to the nature's fury or expansion of city. As of now, 1700 families have been moved to this new

area named "Navallur slum clearance board housing" and have been living here for the past one and a half year.

Though, a pucca approved concrete dwelling is a welcome change for the people who were living in unauthorized huts, there are also many issues. The ladies in these families were working as house maids in Anna nagar and Aminjikkarai areas in heart of Chennai, very close to their huts. The menfolk were employed as security in the apartment complexes nearby. Majority of them do not know any other work. There are few families who can make bamboo baskets, phenyle and some know tailoring. But the vast majority has no skills. As they landed in their new houses, they started looking for the same jobs they were used to – house maid and security jobs. But Sarapanancheeri being in the middle of nowhere, there are no houses or apartments atleast in 5 Kms radius and there is no public transport! With the result, nearly 1700 families are jobless and till now they survive only on

the 20 Kgs of free rice they get through the government ration shops.

Sevalaya visited this village on invitation from Kanchipuram District Collector. Now we are making efforts to do skill development, find market for the items which they can produce and also create job opportunities. As a first step, we took HR from Ambattur Clothing Ltd and they are ready to employ the ladies who know tailoring. Sevalaya will also run a tailoring training centre in Sarpanancheeri to make them employable. We are also trying to find market for the craft items produces in the village.

Soon this place will be full and there will be 2300 poor families who have been dislocated from city for no fault of theirs and have no means to carry on their lives, in such a remote place. Sevalaya will do its best to solve this problem. Need support from all of you.

Thanks and Regards

Sevalaya Murali

Importance of reading books



Kasuva centre of Sevalaya has three libraries, all of them well stacked with a wide variety of books.

Sevalaya children are encouraged from their primary class to borrow books from

Vivekananda *rath* (chariot) makes a stopover at Sevalaya



Each year, for the past five years, the Vivekananda *Rath* makes a halt at Kasuva.

the library and competitions are held to bring out their talent in writing and oratory skills. On 7th December 2017, a competition was held for students of Std IV and V. These events create interest among the students and there is a marked increase in the usage of library.

"I love to draw. I borrow books with pictures and draw all the pictures in my drawing book. This has helped me in remembering stories for a long time. "

K Abhinaya, Std IV

Donor sponsors planting of 100 trees



Smita Sridharan, a donor, chose a unique way to cherish her love for her late grandfather and approached Sevalaya, offering to sponsor 100 saplings, in Kaatuputhur Village, 7 Kms from Uthiramerur taluk, Kanchipuram district, for the tree planting programme, coordinating with R Subramaniam of the village who has taken it upon himself to green the arid village single handedly. Subramaniam promptly rallied a group of youth from the village to dig holes for the saplings. Sevalaya arranged for the saplings and tree guards. Subramaniam has also agreed to take care of watering and maintaining the plants.

DTCC sponsors infrastructure improvements

DTCC has been sending volunteers to Sevalaya for a while now. Seeing the range of activities done by Sevalaya, they came forward to sponsor a couple of projects within the campus, as part of their CSR activity.

One was the construction of nine toilets and five washrooms in the boys and girls hostel and the other was to fix stainless



steel railing in the pathway and in the toilets in the old age home. The project has been successfully completed and is currently being used by the beneficiaries.

Left: New Toilet Block at the Hostel

VA Tech Wabag sponsors drip irrigation system

When Sevalaya approached VA Tech Wabag with a proposal to set up a drip irrigation system at the campus, the management at Wabag spontaneously agreed to sponsor the same.

The total area covered under the Drip irrigation project is 6 acres. It is fully functional now and Sevalaya is able to reap the benefits of the same. Sevalaya was able to derive the synergies of combining three bore wells situated

in divergent locations and channelise the water to the Medical centre, three vegetable and fruit patches and the cattle feed field.

VA Tech Wabag management came to Sevalaya campus for an inspection and appreciated the effective implementation of the project by Sevalaya.

Right: Drip Irrigation System sponsored by VA Tech Wabag



LTI volunteer magic in the organic farm



LTI volunteers clearing up the radish patch

On 23rd December 2017, 42 volunteers from LTI Chennai, worked in organic farm and removed unwanted creepers which had spread over the Sevalaya's boundary walls. They divided the work amongst themselves with one team consisting mostly of women working on the organic farm, where they removed the weeds surrounding the radish vegetable patch.

The other team consisting of men concentrated on cleaning the creepers from the boundary walls. Volunteer.

"It was an honour to have come to your school and it gives me immense pleasure to say that it was a visit filled with a lot of satisfaction. All the best!"

Sachin Das, LTI

PwC India effort to green villages



Eleven volunteers from PwC India came to the campus with one aim in mind- to make as many seed balls as possible (a mixture of earth water and a seed), which can be randomly thrown around the country side. The volunteers spent 4 hours at Sevalaya and made 635 seed balls.

Since the seed has the necessary ingredients needed to sprout, and needs very little water, there's more than a 50% chance that the seed will sprout, and add to the greenery of the villages.

Each volunteer was given a complimentary bag of vegetables. PwC India sponsors the Organic farm in Sevalaya Kasuva campus.

Volunteering activities @ Kasuva campus



On 15th December 2018, 8 volunteers from BNY Mellon visited the campus to teach the basics of Email and English. Four volunteers taught the basics and etiquette of sending and replying to emails to 50 community college students. The volunteers have promised to come back and take one more session. The

other four went to the Primary School and taught conversational English to 30 students of Std II.

On 16th December 2017, 3 volunteers from BNY Mellon came to campus to conduct a mentorship session for 15 students pursuing their Nursing assistant

course in the community college. The session focused on ways to face interviews, and ways to talk during group discussions, and how to conduct practical conversations. The volunteers gave sample topics and asked the students to speak.

"The session was very valuable to us. The volunteers from BNY Mellon told us about the basics of E-mail like opening of e mail accounts, and setting up passwords. They also taught us official correspondence both within and to third parties."

D Saraswathi, computer software, Sevalaya Community College

"The session brought out our talents. I have overcome my fear of attending interviews and am eagerly looking forward to attending interview and a job placement."

M Sharmila, Nursing Assistant Student

Weekly art and craft classes at Ambattur community college



Sathya Dhandapani, Office Assistant at Sevalaya's community college (CC) in Ambattur, has a flair for making fancy items out of ordinary things. The result is simply fabulous. Wall hangings, flower vases, photo frames, flowers in stunning colours are made out of just wool, origami paper, old newspapers, glue, and thread. When the idea was mooted

by Sathya, the students of Ambattur Community College were very interested in Art and Craft classes. It started as a hobby on Saturdays and the response has been overwhelming and the results are very pleasing. Sathya understands the concepts by watching videos in YouTube and has the talent to teach the same in a lively manner.

Chanting of Vishnu Sahasranama by students

On 27th December 2017, 8 students went to Sri Veeraraghavar temple at Thiruvallur to chant Vishnu Sahasranama. This was arranged by a well-wisher A C Ravi. 3 students participated in a group song activity and were given participation certificates.



Medical camp to detect Anemia



Sevalaya and Cholamandalam Investment and Finance company Ltd., conducted a free medical camp near Uttiramerur bus stand on 9th January 2018, to detect Anemia among the village people. Blood test was done on 206 villagers (male 52, female 154) and 52 villagers were found to be anemic. They were given free multivitamin syrup and Iron tablets. The Doctor suggested changes in their food habits and they were asked to eat more greens. The villagers were also educated about the symptoms and ways to prevent anemia.

The mobile medical unit is sponsored by Cholamandalam Investment and Finance company Ltd, which serves 40 villages around Uthiramerur Taluk.

Pongal celebration with Uthiramerur town panchayat



On 6th January 2018, Sevalaya along with Uthiramerur Town Panchayat celebrated Pongal festival which included various events like Rangoli competition, running race and folk dances, folk music competitions. It was an action packed event. The villagers and students of Sevalaya's community college also proved their mettle by creating novel craft items like flower vase out of sheer waste like

newspaper and plastic bottles. Prizes were distributed to the top 3 winners. The prizes were sponsored by LTI who are the also the sponsors of Sevalaya's community college at Vadanallur.

Executive officer M Kesavan, Uthiramerur Town panchayat, and members of Uthiramerur Lions club and Uthiramerur Rotary club participated in the event.

Smokeless Bhoghi awareness rally

1000 students from Schools take a rally around the villages

Sevalaya, organised a students' rally, on the theme "Smokeless Bhogi" on 12th January 2018. More than a 1000 students from schools in and around Sevalaya's Kasuva Centre participated in the rally. The students gathered at Pakkam bus stand, walked around Puliur village, Ramanathapuram village and reached Sevalaya's Kasuva campus. The students carried placards with slogans explaining the hazards of burning tyre, rubber and plastic materials and the need to celebrate a smokeless Bhogi to



B Senthil, District Child Protection Officer, Department of Social Defence, Thiruvallur flagging off the rally

save our earth.

Flagging off the rally, B Senthil, District

Child Protection Officer, Department of Social Defence, Thiruvallur, asked the students to take this important message to their parents to bring about desired changes.

On Bhogi, 13th January 2018, Chief Guest, S Manikandan, Accounts Officer, Department of Social defence, Chennai District, distributed prizes to the winners of the best slogan at the rally held the previous day.

Reminiscing about his humble beginnings he said that poverty should never be an impediment for growth and wished the students a bright future.

650 rural youth compete in basketball and rangoli competition

Sevalaya has been organising volleyball tournaments in rural areas for the past 18 years, coinciding with Pongal. Besides providing entertainment, this also has a social purpose.

Volleyball gives the youth an opportunity to prove their prowess. Sevalaya has been successful in engaging nearly 650 village youth, for a full day in a meaningful sport during Pongal. This year 52 teams from 28 villages participated in the tournament on 7th January 2018 at Sevalaya.



Velliur volleyball club once again was crowned as the champion. Trophies and medals were presented to top 4 teams. The medals and the cups for the winners were sponsored by Henry Maris, Secretary of Nazareth College of arts and science.

This year Sevalaya introduced interschool basketball tournament for boys and girls. 11 teams participated in the tournament. ICF boys and girls were the winners and Sevalaya and La Chateline Junior College, Chennai were the runner-up in the boys and girls category respectively. The tournament was conducted on 11th January at our campus.

For the village women folk, Rangoli competition was conducted on 13th January and women from 32 villages participated. It was a colourful display and there was a lot of bonhomie.

Sevalaya presented three prizes to each village. Sports events for the parents and villagers were also held on the same day.

Top Left: A colourful rangoli pattern in Puliur village

Left: Students show their intensity during the Basketball game



Working in tandem for organic growth

***- C Murugesan and
M Sivagami***

C Murugesan and M Sivagami hail from Paruthurankottai in Namakkal district, and have been working as farmers since they were young. While Murugesan is in his 40's, his wife Sivagami is in her 30's. They were referred to Sevalaya by one of their relatives and were put in charge of the development of fields in Sevalaya's Madhurantakam centre since August 2017. Their goal is to grow organic vegetables and cash crops. Their family consists of 2 sons, both of whom are settled in Namakkal.

Their first foray in harvesting minor millets was a disaster. They had planted the millets in 1.2 acres, in September 2017. Unusual heavy rains in October washed away the entire crop, and took away the top soil along with it.



Having experienced droughts and floods over the years they were not deterred. They started again from ground zero. They leveled the field, ploughed it and on 16th December 2017 they sowed groundnuts in the entire area. At the halfway mark, the groundnuts have reached the flowering stage. The harvest is expected to happen by end February, and based on initial estimates the yield is expected to exceed 1.75 tonnes!

They have also planted more than two dozen casuarina trees adjoining the road to block the sweeping winds. They have

developed a small banana patch, an area for fodder grass for the two cows. They also take care of the saplings that have been planted from JZamin Endathur village main road to the centre.

They make organic pesticides using the manure of the cows and use it in the fields.

They have taken ownership of the fields, and the entire area looks lush green now.

They have been provided living quarters adjoining the fields and their residence is fully powered by solar energy.

Training regimen and discipline helped me succeed

- Santhosh P

Santhosh has been a student at Sevalaya since his Montessori days. "6th November 2017, is an unforgettable day for me. My PT master informed me that I have been chosen to represent Tamilnadu State to participate in School Games Federation of India at New Delhi between 3rd January to 9th January 2018" says Santhosh. .

Santhosh, who plays right wing, gives the entire credit for his achievements to the training regimen at Sevalaya.

He says, "My PT Sir is a strict task master and a disciplinarian. I come to the school at 6:30 am every day. The school has provided me all the necessary sports equipment like shorts, jerseys, shoes, and provide nutritious food apart from milk, and dates. Physiotherapy is also included as part of the training regularly."



He recounts the days that led to his selection and participation in the SGFI games thus:

"I went to Dindigul for the Second selection trials. I was one among the 16 students who were selected in the final selection trials, which was very tough. We went for a rigorous training to Dindigul from 22nd December to 29th December 2017. I concentrated more in my training, with full encouragement from my coach.

In New Delhi the environment was very cold. We could not play to our full potential and hence could not reach quarter finals. But we stayed on to watch other teams play and it was very helpful for me. This was a wonderful experience and made me learn more about my skills."

Santhosh's parents are daily wage earners, and provide moral support to him. He is an above average student. His ambition is to represent the nation in Handball.

Music is for all – Saint Thiagaraja remembered



Saint Thiagaraja Aradhana Festival was held in Sevalaya campus auditorium on 6th January 2018, in a grand manner with children's delightful participation. T S Ranganathan, Director, Giri Trading Co. Chennai participated as the Chief Guest in the function.

In his special address to the audience he said that the art is for all, without discrimination of caste, colour, religion, language. He added that it is unfortunate

that there is a general feeling that Classical Carnatic music is only for the urban elite. He congratulated Sevalaya's efforts to take Carnatic music to rural areas by arranging regular music and dance classes for the children of Sevalaya and by organizing Inter school music competitions.

Earlier, the competition on Thyagayya's Krithis was held on 24th December 2017 at Kasuva campus, to commemorate

the saint composer's 250th birth anniversary. 30 students from 10 Schools participated in the competitions and sang Thyagaraja Krithis. The best performers were given prizes by the Chief Guest, T S Ranganathan.

"This is the first time we are practicing Saint Thyagaraja krithis. We practiced and prepared well for the competition. Although our team secured 3rd place in Group singing activity, we are very confident of improving and performing well next year."

B Pooja, Std IX

"We participate in many activities organized by like rallies, essay competitions and exhibitions. For the first time we have participated in singing competition on Saint Thyagaraja krithis. We got."

V Vaishnavi, Smt. Krishna Moolchand Maheshwari Vivekananda Vidyalaya, Thiruninravur

Motivation and life education



Usha Ramakrishnan, Director, Global Adjustments Foundation came to the campus on 26th December 2017 to give some handy tips on facing the Board

exams, like the importance of time management and optimum use of the coming three months with targets for each subject. She also spoke about the type of food students should eat prior to appearing for the Board exams, for best results. 267 students of Std XI and XII attended the session.

"We learnt that education is the most important asset for everyone, perseverance is the key to achieving any goal, and to keep our dreams alive."

S Kiran, Std XII

Roundup of awareness training



S C Suresh, Project coordinator, Kasuva centre takes his job of imparting awareness training on saving power, waste management, waste segregation, usage and disposal of plastic items, food and water management as well as speaking on Global warming, seriously.

He conducts regular sessions at each of the five campuses and explains in depth about conservation of energy and disposal of waste. There has been a marked improvement in the attitude of the staff in all the campuses of Sevalaya. In 2018, alone he has conducted 9 such sessions.

"Suresh sir's session was very informative. He asked us to look for water leaks while the motor is running, use electrical items that are connected to solar power during the day, switch off all lights and fans when not in use, reduce usage of fans during the monsoon months. It was very practical session."

N Poomani, Bharathi Unit

Training on meditation and stress management



Ranjini Manian, Editor-In-Chief, Global Adjustments Foundation, took a training session on Meditation and Stress Management on 26th December 2017, at the campus for 40 teachers from Elementary, Middle and High school. She emphasized on the need to monitor stress even as it begins to manifest. She spoke about the negative effects of stress and the importance of meditation to limit the effects of stress.

"When Ranjini Manian asked us to share positive thoughts about ourselves, we were able to express our views honestly. The 10 minute meditation session had a calming effect in our minds."

E Aparna, Teacher, Primary school

Prison life - October - December 1908

General Smuts, who had agreed to repeal the Black Act if the Asiatics would voluntarily register themselves, went back on his words. While the voluntary registrations were validated, the original act was still in the books, so that those who did not register voluntarily before the cut-off date and the later entrants were subject to the obnoxious Act. The Indians intensified the agitation. Those who voluntarily registered gathered and made a bonfire of about 2000 certificates. Those who were outside Transvaal entered the state without permit. Both the resident Indians and those who entered without certificates started hawking goods without permits, which was a violation of law. They were arrested and sent to jail for periods ranging from two to three months with rigorous labour and fine. Those who courted arrest included prominent businessmen.

Gandhiji pleaded with General Smuts that while many in the rank and file of passive resisters were suffering imprisonment, he

himself who was the chief instigator was still at large. He asked, "Is it courageous to leave me alone and harass the poor Indians?"

On September 29, 1908, Gandhiji was arrested with 15 others. On October 15 he was fined 25 Pounds or to undergo imprisonment for two months with hard labour. Gandhiji said he would not pay the fine and would go to jail. The Judge remarked, "I very much regret to see Mohandas Gandhi, an officer of this court and of Supreme Court in the present position. Gandhi may feel otherwise looking at the situation in the light that he is suffering for his country. But I can view it only from the other point of view"

The charge against Gandhiji was he was not able to produce the certificate (having consigned it to flames) and was not prepared to affix fingerprints as a mark of identification.

He was sent to Volkrust prison and given the job as a sweeper and also to work

digging the earth. He sent a message to the passive resisters lodged in different prisons, "Keep absolutely firm to the end. Suffering is our remedy. Victory is certain."

On October 27, Gandhiji was transferred to Johannesburg prison. He was lodged with dangerous criminals and had to keep awake throughout the night. He was released in the first week of December 1908, after the end of the term.

In his moving letter to Kasturbai from prison he writes, "I have received West's telegram about your illness. I feel heartbroken. But I cannot come to look after you. I have sacrificed all in Satyagraha struggle. I can come only if I pay the fine. And that is not to be done. You must not lose heart. You will certainly get well if you regulate your diet. Even it is my fate to lose you, I love you so much even if you are dead you will always be alive to me. You should depart with faith in God. Such death will be in accordance with the principle of Satyagraha."

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