

## Sevalaya offers free legal aid for rural poor Two lawyers, 4 hours every Saturday



*D Ilangovan (middle) Hon'ble Principal District Judge and Chairman, District legal services, Thiruvallur inaugurating the free legal cell at the campus*

Sevalaya's Legal aid cell is its latest initiative to serve legal needs of the people who have limited access to such facilities. Two lawyers will visit Kasuva campus between 11am-1pm every Saturday to provide free legal aid.

At a colourful function in Kasuva campus, the free legal aid cell was inaugurated by D Ilangovan, the Hon'ble Principal District Judge & Chairman, District Legal Services, Thiruvallur. Declaring open the cell, he opined that it is necessary for lawyers to render legal help to the needy, as and

when needed, since their voice needs to be heard too.

Prof D S Narayana Perumal, Director Law Institute, under the auspices of Tamil Nadu Dr Ambedkar Law University, Dr Balaji, Registrar, Dr Ashok Kumar, Assistant Registrar, School of Excellence, Dr Ambedkar Law University, and others participated in the function.

Earlier in the day, a workshop was held for Law students and a rally held to create awareness about food safety and the importance of FSSAI logo in



*Law students creating an awareness among rural villagers*

each of the packaged food item, among rural poor. The rally was flagged off by M Pichammal, Chairman & District Judge, Permanent Lok Adalat. While flagging off the rally, she advised that rural people are sometimes lured to part with their meagre belongings, mostly land to unscrupulous elements. She advised Law students to help poor.

G Saraswathi, Secretary & Senior Civil Judge, District Legal Service Authority, opined that more such legal aid centres should be opened.

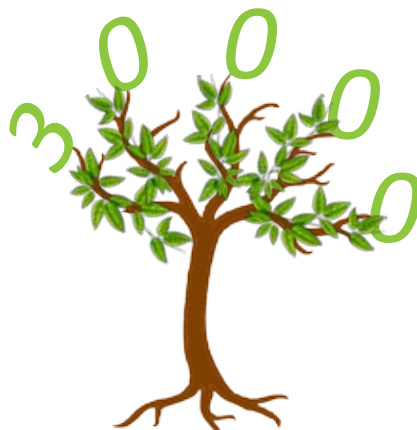
The highlight of the event was the participation of over 100 students from Ambedkar Law University. Hand bills on on consumer rights and legal awareness were distributed to the select 200 houses in person.

## Goal: Planting 30,000 tree saplings

To commemorate Sevalaya's entering the 30th year, one of the goals set is to plant 30,000 saplings by June 2019. L&T Construction Ltd donated 2000 saplings to kickstart this initiative to spread the green cover among villages in rural Tamilnadu.

1650 saplings were distributed and planted by students of Sevalaya's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School, 100 by Sevalaya's Mambakkam community college students, 150 by

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### Greetings from Sevalaya!

*The children, senior citizens and staff of Sevalaya extend their warm and sincere New Year wishes to all our donors.*

*We look forward to your visit to our campus during the coming year.*

# Joy of giving: *the way of life*

Dear Friends,

Wish you all a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and prosperous Pongal. The holiday season has started and we can see it in the face of all we meet. Every family is planning holiday trips to hill stations, temples as well as taking holidays overseas. Zoo, museums, beaches, parks, circus, cinema etc. are all full. In Chennai all sabhas are hosting Carnatic music programs, and different forms of dances as well as drama. Tickets are scarce to get. All restaurants, public places and roads are all full. There is joy everywhere and people are very happy to greet each other "Happy new year".

This is the time of the year when people are away from their tiring work, targets, and demanding bosses! When we are very happy, we can very easily play the role of Santa and help people around as well. Here are some ideas how you can

make your holidaying more enjoyable.

- When you buy new dresses for Christmas, New Year or Pongal most of you have an overflowing wardrobe. Try to make space for the new purchases by donating the old but usable items to orphanages / old age homes. If possible, you can buy new ones for them too.
- When you plan day trips to zoo, museum etc., also keep in mind a day trip to orphanages and old age homes will be equally enjoyable. Moreover, the children and senior citizens in Homes will also enjoy your visit.
- You can include in your cake order, one big cake for the orphan children. They will be very happy to celebrate Christmas with the cake you donate!
- Along with your family, you can take some kids from the orphanages and senior citizens from old age homes to

places of worship to seek the blessings of the Almighty! God will be happy to bless you quickly!

- You may plan to celebrate Pongal in an orphanage, you can make Pongal in the open field, eat sugarcane with the children and enjoy the cries of "Pongalo Pongal" with those children
- You can celebrate Mattu pongal, with real cows in Gausshalas.
- You can enjoy traditional music and dance with poor children – either perform in their place or take them to concerts along with your family.

There can be more and better ideas to make the holiday season an enjoyable and useful one. Try it this year.

Thanks and Regards

Sevalaya Murali

## Statesman Rajaji – A man for all seasons

*Continued from page 1*



*M Bhavani, Std IX, studying in Govt High School, Melpallipettu, Thiruvannamalai District getting trophy for essay writing from T S Krishnamoorthy, Former Chief Election Commissioner*

Sevalaya celebrates Rajaji's birth anniversary every year to remember and pay rich tributes to his unparalleled contributions to the nation. This year the celebration was held in the campus on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2017. T S Krishnamoorthy, Former Chief Election Commissioner, was the Chief Guest on the occasion.

During his address to the children, he quoted a couplet from Tirukkural and explained that the students, to be good citizens, should eschew jealousy, greed, lust and evil speech. He recalled Rajaji's great contributions to the nation, particularly his core ideology on

prohibition, and its evil fallout. Rajaji introduced Sales Tax to compensate the State's exchequer's revenue loss because of prohibition. His farsightedness, thoughts, and planning are par excellence. He made a special mention that Rajaji never sought publishing rights to any of his great works. This proved his magnanimity, in serving the people.

Several admirers of Rajaji took part in the function and spoke of Rajaji for the benefit of the children. Prizes were distributed to the children who participated and won in the competitions on the life and works of Rajaji.

Vadanallur community college students, and 100 by Ambattur community college students. These saplings will be cared for by the students and staff of the respective units.

It is pertinent to note that Sevalaya campus alone lost more than 300 trees during Cyclone Vardha last December. Sevalaya, thus, initiated steps to plant more tree saplings around the campus and villages.



*Before*



*After*

# Unique culinary festival by fifth graders



L to R: V Gayathri, S Sripriyanka, N Sophiya, E Tamilarasi, V Sai Sriram and T Dhivyadharshini displaying their nutritious food items

When they were talking about food festivals from a lesson in their Tamil text, an idea occurred to them. Why not try this in our school? The excited students approached their teachers R Umashankari, S Muthu, and V Kalaiarasi, who immediately gave them the go ahead.

The students came up with charts and diagrams explaining the types of nutritious food, type of preparation, and the advantages of eating nutritious food. The charts also explained the demerits of eating packaged food.

The teachers ensured that the idea

wasn't just that, but prodded the students to organize a food festival. Once the students got in the plan, each of them sold their idea to their parents who made food made out of indigenous material like millet flour for *Dosas* and *Upma*, *Adai* and *Vada*, and a couple of varieties of health mix and sweet meats made out of nine grains. They displayed the items in the campus on 29th November 2017, and the entire school wore a festive look. Students from other classes complimented the students for organizing this and highlighting the advantages of eating ethnic food made out of locally available grains.

"It was a sudden thought and all of us were excited when the teachers gave us the go ahead. We were initially very apprehensive, but the constant encouragement from our teachers made the food festival a grand success."

V Gayathri, Std V

## Students display their creativity



Twenty students displayed their handiwork during the craft exhibition at the campus on 9th November 2017, as their Craft teacher S Kauvery looked on proudly. The items included tulip flower set, flower bunches, floor mats, clay lights, earrings, stone chains, wall hangings, origami, doormats, and many more. Most of the items were made from old newspapers, and other low cost materials like palm leaf, cane, coconut shell, pencils and woolen thread.

The craft exhibition was patronized by

visitors from the surrounding village and all the students from the school and drew accolades from all. The parents were proud of their children's creativity. The exhibition attracted more than 400 people from nearby villages.

"We have craft class every week and I participate without fail. I had made a house with icecream stick. I felt very happy to participate in the craft exhibition. This was a wonderful opportunity to showcase my talent."

E Mirudula, Std IX

## Craft making at Mambakkam



C Sumathi, Tailoring Instructor, Sevalaya's Community College, Mambakkam is very interested in making craft items like chains, ear-rings, bangles and bracelets. Her passion for the same has spawned a new activity in the community college. She teaches the local girls, homemakers, and other staff about making these items on Sundays at the community college. All the ornaments are made from silk thread.

Most of the women who come to learn are from middle income category and they have become small scale entrepreneurs by selling the ornaments they make in the local fancy stores. They see a lot of demand for these ornaments.

## Community college students volunteer at Puttaparthi



Above: V Vignesh performing gate duty at Puttaparthi ashram

Right: Gardening service



Every year, the students of the community college volunteer at Sri Sathya Sai Baba Ashram, Prasanthi Nilayam at Puttaparthi. This year 13 students along with one teacher participated in the 10 day service camp from 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2017. For many it was the first trip out of Chennai. On reaching the Prasanthi Nilayam, all of them were struck by the serenity of the place as well as the

bounty of nature, with the entire place resembling a garden filled with trees and birds chirping away. Two teams were formed and 5 students given the task of manning the entrance gate, gardening, moving provision items between store room and kitchen. The other team consisting of 8 students was given the job of manning the dormitory. They were given the responsibility of taking care

of the reception like giving in and out passes to the guests and visitors to the dormitory, maintain the reception ledger, inform the guests about the duration of their stay and gently remind them about their departure timings during their stay.

The students took up the responsibility with eagerness and though they had to work in shifts, they enjoyed the experience.

Most of the students mentioned that they will make the trip again to Prasanthi Nilayam, even if they had to, at their own cost. This is the power of volunteering!

"I am studying in AC and refrigeration mechanic in Sevalaya's Community College in Kasuva. At Puttaparthi, I was given the gate duty during my 10 days stay. It gave me a feeling of a security guard, checking all the vehicles that came into the campus. I enjoyed the experience and hope to visit the place again."

**V Vignesh, Student**

## Importance of reading books



Sevalaya has three libraries, all of them well stacked with a wide variety of books. Many studies have shown that children who read are more imaginative and are able to come up with quick solutions to issues. Sevalaya children are encouraged from their primary class to borrow books from the library and competitions are held to bring out their talent in writing and oratory skills. On 7<sup>th</sup> December 2017, one such competition was held for students of IV and V students. These kind of events create interest among the students and the count of children using the library is on an uptick each year.

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

**K Abhinaya, Std IV**

## Baby shower for 'Sevalaya's daughter'



Selvi, daughter of Sevalaya, was a resident in the organisation since her childhood and completed her schooling. Then she was sent by Sevalaya to Gandhigram, Dindigul to do a 1 year nursing assistant programme. She completed the course and came back and was about to take up a job when Vijay, a Software Engineer working at Polaris Consulting and Services Ltd, Chennai approached Sevalaya through a contact, offering to marry a suitable girl from the Home. Sevalaya management and Vijay's family discussed and

with the consent of Vijay and Selvi, the marriage was arranged. It was celebrated in Sevalaya and large number of donors and Vijay's family and friends attended the wedding. After marriage Selvi moved to the city to be with her husband and in-laws. Selvi's *Seemantham* (Baby shower) was held on 13<sup>th</sup> December at her in-laws place. A group of Sevalayans and Vijay's relatives attended the function and blessed the couple for a safe delivery and a glorious future.

## General health awareness camp in local school



Uttiramerur Rotary club and Sevalaya teamed up to conduct a general health awareness program in Ward 1 and Ward 3 Panchayat middle school at Uthiramerur. On 14<sup>th</sup> December 2017, the mobile medical van parked in the schools and the doctor spoke to the children about the importance of general hygiene and maintaining good health. About 82 students studying between Std VI to Std VIII were the beneficiaries of this programme. Most of the students suffered from malnutrition, skin disease

and wheezing. Free medicines were distributed to the children.

Dinesh of Std VII was diagnosed with heart ailment. His case was escalated to his parents and the School headmaster, and was promptly referred to the nearby hospital for further treatment.

Cholamandalam Investment & Finance Company Limited are the sponsors of the mobile medical unit operating from Vadanallur, Uttiramerur taluk, Kanchipuram Dt.

## Health and wellness awareness for girls



Rotaract club of Aadithya sponsored by Rotary club of Anna Nagar conducted an awareness session on health and personal hygiene for girl students studying in Std VI to Std IX, at Sevalaya campus.

The session, aptly titled "PENMAI" conducted by Rtn Aswini Sukumar, Project Chairman, and Rtn S Kausalya, President, Rotary club of Annanagar, was all about awareness on hormonal imbalance, problems during menstruation and how

to mitigate those problems by eating healthy diet, maintaining menstrual hygiene internally and externally and proper disposal of sanitary napkins. She also explained about the risk factors of unhygienic menstrual practice.

"The session was very informative and I will follow the hygienic practices. I will also follow a healthy diet, going forward."

**M Poornima, Std IX**

## Training on learning disability



T S Venkataramani, Hon Coordinator, Sevalaya visited our campus on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017 to train the teachers on methods to teaching children with learning disability. The interactive session started off with a PPT presentation. T S Venkataramani focused on ways to make the children give the right answers, encourage and find out the abilities of each child and build confidence among the children.

Each teacher explained the ways they interact with children who have learning disability. This sharing of experience brought out many interesting ways to teach and nudge the children to learn effectively.

"The gist of the session was to provide encouragement to the children with learning disability and focus on improving their skills. This session has motivated me to do more for the kids."

**S Parkavi, English Teacher**

## Individualized training for students



R Vijaya, Headmistress of Sevalaya 's Mahakavi Bharathiyar Higher Secondary School and Rekha Perumal, IT Support, Sevalaya, attended a one day seminar on how to create 21<sup>st</sup> century learners conducted by Google education groups and HCL Training centre, at Villupuram on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2017. The takeaway from this seminar was to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the students using online tools in Google Apps and find ways to help them, in areas where they need improvement.

## Independent, yet compassionate

### -Ramachandra Rao

*Thatha* Ramachandra Rao, 76, was brought to Sevalaya by his sister's son-in-law last year. His wife Mahalakshmi is also a resident of the old age home. Their only child died within a month of its birth. Due to family circumstances they decided to raise their sister's children as their own. The children are now comfortably settled in life.

He fondly recollects his younger days: "I hail from West Mambalam. I studied till Std X and worked as a cashier since my teen years in the hospitality industry, mostly in and around Chennai. After working for more than five decades, I decided to retire. After retirement, we did not want to disturb anyone. I got some money as benefits – a significant portion



of which I have donated to Sevalaya. Of course, Sevalaya's Old Age Home is a free Home and no charges are collected, but I donated my savings to the organisation on my own. My wife and I have happily settled down here. She lives right across in another room with other female residents, so I really don't miss her much. We both go to the dining hall together and sometimes we even spend time together sitting on a bench and chatting."

He finds it very easy to spend time in Sevalaya. He is very independent and

takes care of his activities by himself. He keeps abreast with the latest news by reading the newspaper, and helps around the kitchen. After being initially apprehensive about how he could blend in a new environment, he feels he has settled down rather well.

He says, "All I want now is just to be healthy till the last breath. I pray for the same every day. Sevalaya is a wonderful place to grow old. We have a variety of activities to keep ourselves busy."

## Making one move a time

### -J Vishal, IX std

"I want to get up and walk," says J Vishal, a quadriplegic since birth. It is this hope that flashes in his eyes. Hope is a good thing to have and live by. He knows about Paralympics and about Stephen Hawking – one of the world's greatest scientist who works from a wheelchair and talks through a computer. There is no doubt that Vishal can hope and dream of bright future in Chess.

He hails from Puliur, a neighbouring village. He joined Sevalaya School from Std VI and is now studying in Std IX.

His father learnt chess from his friends in the village, and taught it to his wife and children. Family time, once a week, meant playing chess regularly which turned out to be an inspiration for Vishal and his brother.



He commutes to school in his father's bike and the moment he reaches the school his friends bring out the wheelchair from the classroom to take him in. He is comfortable navigating around school in his wheelchair. He relies on a couple of friends who assist him at school.

Vishal's ambition is to join the civil services and serve the people, especially the destitute and downtrodden.

His daily routine is to go home and finish

his homework first. Later on he watches television and if time permits, catches a game of chess with members of his family.

He won 2 out of 5 rounds in the Thiruvallur Rapid selection Chess championship held at Brittanica High school, Padi on 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2017.

"This is the just the beginning for me. I am confident of winning in many competitions," says Vishal proudly.

## Practical banking and commerce session



On 29<sup>th</sup> November 2017, G Subramanian, Director and GM, Finance & Support Services, Flatirons Jouve, conducted

a session on Banking, Commerce and Accountancy for students of Std XI and XII students. 72 students attended the

session and benefitted from his expertise. He explained in detail about the process of clearing cheques between banks, and preparation of bank reconciliation statements. He also shared information about sharemarket operations and foreign currency details. He also explained the concepts of inflation and deflation, which was very relevant from examination point of view. He has promised to come again to coach the students, before the final examination.

"The session was very informative and gave us practical insight about banking and accounting practices, as well as Economics. He motivated us by telling us the story of his life."

**A Mahalakshmi, Std XII**

## Celebrating the genius of Srinivas Ramanujan



Seated (from L to R) Sevalaya Murali, P B Vijayraghavan, Officer on special duty, CAMS Pvt Ltd, N K Prasad, President & CEO CAMS Pvt Ltd, E Lakshminarayanan, Trustee, Sevalaya, Amarchand Jain, Advisor, Sevalaya and Sachin, Volunteer, LTI

The 130<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Mathematics genius Srinivas Ramanujan was celebrated at the Sevalaya campus on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2017.

Every year Sevalaya conducts an inter district Maths Talent Test for students of Std VI to XII from Thiruvallur, Kanchipuram and Chennai to commemorate the occasion. Prizes will be distributed to the toppers at the Ramanujan Day celebrations.

This year N K Prasad, President & CEO CAMS Pvt. Ltd, Chennai, the Chief Guest, distributed prizes to the toppers on the occasion.

In his address, the Chief Guest told the students that the reach of Mathematics is

indispensable, as its applicability reaches far and wide and that the ancient Indians discovered 'zero' which is the very basis for Mathematics.

"Ramanujan was a humble person hailing from a simple background, with little formal education, and discovered formulae and equations that stunned the world. Even the genius from West acclaimed his greatness for his contributions, even though he did not have any facilities. He could understand the critical aspects of the subject. Within a short time he founded several theories, solutions and equations, which even today many are trying to decipher" noted N K Prasad.

## Editing videos in cell phones



On 20<sup>th</sup> December 2017, S C Suresh, Project Co-ordinator and Rekha Perumal, IT support attended a one day training on efficient ways to edit videos taken via cell phones. The session was conducted by Sharada Gopalakrishnan, Cinematographer, Smiley Media and Shaktivel Pannerselvam, Founder, The6.in. They spoke about different software available in all Play Stores and ways to create pleasant videos and make them catchy.

"Attending this session has given me a lot of ideas about editing videos and make it more effective."

**S C Suresh, Project Co-ordinator**

## Annadhanam by Iyyappan Seva Sangam, Pattabiram



Sevalaya children and senior citizens were invited to 53rd year vilakku pooja

## Gandhiji's prison life-1

Transvaal Government in South Africa passed an Act on 21<sup>st</sup> March 1907. The Act required Asians to register themselves with the authorities, and many humiliating conditions were attached to the registration and production of the Registration Certificate. The Passive Resistance Association led by Gandhiji carried on an intensive non-violent struggle against this Act. The form of protest was to defy the legislation and refuse to register and undergo whatever punishment was inflicted. . Even after two extensions, only 500 out of the total of 13000 registered themselves. Irked by the lukewarm response, General Smuts decided that the leaders who instigated the resistance were to be arrested. Accordingly Gandhiji and several others were produced before the court on 28<sup>th</sup> December 1907. The magistrate ordered that they should leave the country within 48 hours. The time limit expired on 10<sup>th</sup> January 1908. They were produced in the court on the same day. Before the magistrate, Gandhiji submitted that resisters in Pretoria had been sentenced

to three months' imprisonment with hard labour and also were levied a hefty fine. He pleaded that as his own offence was much greater, he should be given a more severe punishment. But the magistrate chose to give him only two months' simple imprisonment.

The clothes that were given to Gandhiji were very dirty. Gandhiji reconciled himself to wear them. The cell door was locked at 6:00PM. The door was not made of bars but was quite solid. There was a small aperture high up in the wall so that the feeling was that of having been locked up in a safe. In South Africa there were only two classes of convicts, namely whites and Blacks, i.e. the Negroes, and the Indians were classed with Negroes. The next day it was informed that prisoners without hard labour were entitled to keep their own private clothing. Otherwise they would be given special clothing appropriate to their class. They opted to get clothing assigned to Negro prisoners not punished with hard labour. As such clothing was not available;

the Satyagrahis opted to take the clothing assigned to hard labour Negro prisoners. The food allowed in the jail was not only not tasty but was indigestible. The prisoners were later allowed to cook their own food. Even though they were not called upon to join the physical exercises, they took part in the drill sessions. During the Jail term, Gandhiji read books by Carlyle, Johnson, Scott, Bacon, Ruskin and Tolstoy. He started translating books by Carlyle and Ruskin into Gujarati, but the task could not be fulfilled as he and his colleagues were released on 30<sup>th</sup> January 1909, as a result of an agreement reached with General Smuts.

How this agreement resulted in difficulties for Gandhiji. How General Smuts reneged on his words as a result of which Gandhiji hardened his stand and intensified his struggle is another matter which requires a separate study.

This was the first jail term of Gandhiji which lasted for 381 days.

## They teach...and learn

Chloe Elizabeth of Birmingham, UK and Hannah Ross from Scotland, UK came to Sevalaya via Project Trust, UK. Both of them have completed School final and have come to volunteer their gap year here.

Chloe and Hannah teach English to the children at school. They bring the children under their spell by the twinkle of an eye. Concerned that everyone should understand their lessons, they question the children repeatedly. This has helped the students learn better. Hannah helps the students to understand the distinction between singular and plural by giving practical examples.

Hannah and Chloe have eagerly adapted to Indian culture. They wear traditional bangles, anklets, ear-rings, and other ornaments and adorn bindi in their foreheads. They have virtually transformed themselves into girls from

Tamilnadu!! They are delighted to wear chudidars and sarees. Initially, we found it difficult to wear a saree but now we are more comfortable," says Hannah.

They learn Tamil with enthusiasm and enjoy listening to Tamil songs. Their pronunciation is clear. They clearly



explain about human anatomy in Tamil. They will volunteer at Sevalaya till August 2018. They exude confidence that by then they will be able to learn Tamil well and converse fluently.

"Life is short. Enjoy it well, Render service to the best of your capacity." seems to be their gospel.

*-Excerpts from Dhina Thanthi article dated 17<sup>th</sup> December 2017*

"The joint family system of the Indian culture kindles sad thoughts in me. My father and mother live separately. I live with my mother. Here all members of the family happily live together. I like this way of life. Being around people makes me happy. I don't feel homesick thanks to the love and affection that people shower on me."

**Chloe Elizabeth**

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