Our community based Kindergarten Activity

Myself Project:

The month of July started with self-enquiry. All the children did a project called “myself” in which they could learn about their own bodies. To begin with, each child lay on a large piece of paper and had their body outline traced. Equipped with a “map” of their body, they went about drawing and filling in all the different body parts. The kids also enjoyed playing with a body puzzle in which removable pieces needed to be fitted into their appropriate places in a large human body puzzle.

This project was followed by a blast of colors as the children ambled on to their next adventure: learning about colors. They brought multicolored objects from their homes and identified their colors and they sang many color-related songs and dressed up in color themes on a daily basis.

Dear Friends,

Wow! 2015 is a great year for us with lots of fun and friends, lots of challenges; we have achieved a lot as you will read in the overview in this newsletter.

All this was made possible through the collaboration and contributions of parents, children, teachers, volunteers, staff, sponsors & donors, for which we are grateful.
Ganesh Pooja:

September blossomed all around as the children began their project on fruits. They learnt all about fruits’ names and also got to taste them.

This happy spirit carried on into the Ganesh pooja. Each child was given a paper with a printed outline of Ganesha that they could fill in whichever way they wished. Some of them colored and others pasted and all forms of creativity emerged. All of this was accompanied by watching Ganesha-related movies and songs and listening to a lot of spiritual rhymes in honor of the elephant God. One day before the official festival, all the children celebrated together at the kindergarten. Traditional sweets such as pongal, sweet rice cakes, chick peas and fruits were distributed. In this way, happy hearts reached the end of the month.

Field Visit:

The month of August added a new friendship for all the children as they started to make visits to a coconut garden! The lovely garden lays only ½ kilometer from Mohanam. A free and open space, it has become a weekly delight for the children as they have a short walk there now on every Monday.

Independence Day:

This month also brought with it a sense of freedom as Independence Day (on the 15th) approached. Children and parents celebrated the day together by hoisting the nation’s flag. The flag tree was beautifully decorated with flowers that the kids had brought from home and the event ended on a sweet note with sweets distributed to all.
Special Guest Visit:

Pondicherry Chief Secretary Visit

It was almost a miracle for us at Mohanam and the Bamboo Centre to have the Chief Secretary Shri. Manoj Parida, I.A.S. from the Pondicherry government visit. The purpose of the August 7th visit was for them to find out more about our Auroville-inspired activities.

We shared about our rural tourism project, which is a part of the Pondicherry government, and we requested help to move on with this community project. Some assurance was given.

University tourism students visit

On August 22nd, part of a university tourism team came to visit. They wanted to know about our activities and to be inspired. We shared on what is going on and invited participation through interning or volunteering in the educational field.

Cultural Performance:

Daiko drum workshop

On July 5-6th, we participated in a three day Daiko drum workshop. As part of this great experience, we learned Japanese traditional beats and dance movements and left.

DakshinaChitra Ganesh Chadhurthi ceremony

The DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum in Chennai invited the Mohanam team for their Ganesh Chadhurthi ceremony on September 17th. During this cultural sharing for visitors and well-wishers alike, our young boys gave four folk performances and were awarded compliments and certificates by the Director of the museum. Many visitors appreciated the programme and we expect that this will lead to more opportunities for the group to gain new experiences in performing.
Legal Awareness Camp

On July 23rd, Mohanam and the Pondicherry department of Law, together, organized a legal aid awareness camp. The purpose of the camp was to explain what free legal services are available to people living “below the poverty line” and many people came to learn how to save time and money whilst getting the help they need.

During one of the days the chief guest explained how in his line of duty he had seen many crime court cases relating to youth accused (aged 17-20 years, mainly), who were not properly guided and so were misunderstood. He also expressed his appreciation for the many excellent ways in which Mohanam is active in enabling the local youth to take on a responsibility for social reform, for example through our dance and music activities.

Some 150 participants from the local community joined.

Mohanam consulting services to village women

Mohanam has been active in the field of keeping alive the cultural heritage of the region for fourteen years and that is probably why we were invited by the Auroville Village Action Group to help with their event on July 10-18th. Sixteen village women joined for Thappattam and Oyilattam and presented a wonderful performance to end the Women’s Day celebrations.
International Youth Day celebrations and New Arts Youth Centre inauguration

The Mohanam team helped Auroville Youth Link organize the International Youth Day celebrations in Auroville. August 12th saw a one day program which included exhibitions, presentations, videos, stage performances and fires, all related to youth.

Mohanam performed music using recycled materials and showcased our creative greeting cards and root crafts as well as traditional cookies. A great relationship-building experience for us all.

We also took the opportunity to inaugurate our new space. For the last fourteen years, Mohanam has been successfully running arts activities in Sanjeevi Nagar village and now that we have been given a new space by Auroville, we have shifted all arts activities to the Mohanam Youth Space and the Bamboo Forest.

So, on August 12th there was a ceremony to inaugurate the new Mohanam Arts Centre. The purpose of this centre is to give more opportunities for learning about ecological building using bamboo, coconut leaves and cow dung. It is in line with the on-going work to bridge Auroville and its neighboring villages.

Our chief guest, the Nehru Yuvakendra District Coordinator, gave a speech to the youth, highlighting how he feels that Mohanam helps facilitate the integration of young people to positively contribute to the community, especially through our wonderful cultural performances.

Now, more than 60 children and youth from Auroville and the surrounding villages participate in our dances, music, and arts and crafts events.

On September 1st our Mohanam activity changed to a new place: the Mongil Garden. This was to offer easier access to the Mohanam arts class activity. Many new classes, such as karate, silambam, theatre, odissi, drawing and bharatnatiyam, were launched, thus extending our offering to village children.
The contribution of Auroville, the parents and the participants it is not enough to cover all the costs of our program. Without the financial support of our sponsors we would not be able to offer this rich variety of programs.

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO DONATE?**

**HERE’S HOW**

The easiest and simplest way to transfer money is by “SWIFT” (electronic transfer) from anywhere. Go to your bank and give them the following information, with your donation.

**SWIFT CODE:** SBININBB474

**Account with State Bank of India, Auroville**

International Township Branch, Kuirapalayam,

Auroville - 605 101 - India

Branch Code: 03160

**Name of the Account Holder:**

Auroville Unity Fund

**Account No:** 10237876508

**Purpose:** Mohanam Cultural Centre

We are very grateful to the Friends of Mohanam, our staff, the volunteers and the sponsors, who prepared and manifested the various programs. Also thank the local village communities which have helped and supported us in so many ways. And our special thanks to our ongoing supporters Nia Friends, Melissa Michael from Golden Bridge, Cornelia Baldini and Lions Club of The Netherlands.

*With love and gratitude*

The Mohanam Team