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UPCOMING EVENTS

- Sports Day
- Arts Day
- Project Day
- Dance program in Chennai
- Choir program in Chennai



Highlights

- In the third term the highlight was the Annual Day in February
- The roof of the new building is done and we are awaiting a the installation of the solar panels
- Plans are also underway to have a gobar gas plant
- The children went on two trips to Chennai and Yercaud
- The computer room is now operational and we have six computers for the children in the upper class.
- Plans are underway to get a second school bus

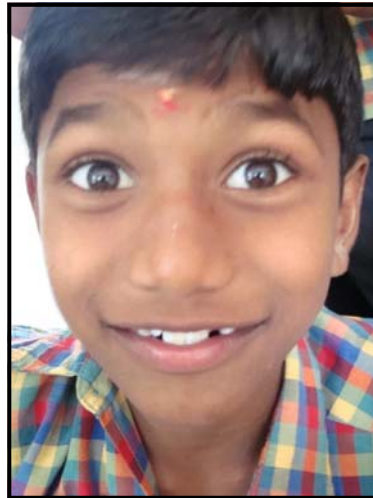


Prema Rangachary Reports:

- **As our children advance into higher grades we are introducing test of competency of the core curriculum. In spite of never taken formal test, our students performed at superior levels as the end of the term.**
- **We are also graduating the first batch of teacher trainees who will be certified in early childhood education and will go and teach in other rural villages**
- **The Bhuvana Foundation is developing plans for a vocational school to begin 2015.**

Manoj is one of our founder children coming from Kondanoor, a village about 3km from Anaikatti. Kondanoor typifies most of village of the region, with wild life and a close community nestled in the foot hills. Manoj greatly enjoys this aspect of his village, often exploring the nearby forest and seeing various species of bird, elephants, monkeys and bison. Its not uncommon for elephants to stray into the village and upset the quiet evening or night. He has many friends in his village and they play with tops and marbles typical of children all over.

with his two brothers are both studying; government school. cutter in the forests and his in Veerapandi.



An enthusiastic member of that Vidya Vanam offers, ricular aspects. Manoj

has been thriving ever since. 'Vidya Vanam is very beautiful, there is lots of trees and air.' is his description of the school. He refuses to choose a favourite class, stating that he can't possibly pick. Manoj shows a strong aptitude in games and particularly enjoys the opportunity to taste different sports. His favorite time of the year is August 15th, Independence Day which is Vidya Vanam's annual Sports Day. With a cheeky grin, Manoj describes Paati (as Prema Rangachary is affectionately called) 'very cute' and is particularly thankful for the school toilets! (Vidya Vanam outreach in in the process of educating the village community on use and maintenance of toilets)

Manoj describes his relationship 'annas,' (brothers) excitedly de-round up all the youngsters in the nearby place to play cricket. His one in college and one in a local Manoj's father works as a wood-mother at a nearby brick factory

Krishna class, Manoj enjoys all both the academic and extra cur-joined the school at LKG level, and

'I want to go there' Manoj says as he stands and points to the highest peak in the area, 'In the world of the mountains it is the highest one.' He then continues to tell us the story of Lord Shiva and Vishnu, whereby Vishnu is jealous of the height of the Shiva mountain (which is the same one Manoj wishes to climb) so fires an arrow into it. Aside from this, with school and college finished, Manoj hopes to pursue his dream of being a professional Bharathanathyam dancer; 'why means, the Bharathanathyam is very simple, but it is hard work.' This is a clear demonstration of Manoj's dedication to this dance form and reflective of his attitude. However, whatever he does he promises to always return to Kondanoor.

Annual Day

On 8th and 9th of February 2013, Vidya Vanam celebrated Annual Day. Friday was Junior Annual Day with heart warming performances from the little ones. On Saturday we truly saw the magic Vidya Vanam has to offer with excellently executed plays, dances and songs from the senior school. Rehearsals had been going on constantly in the run up to Annual Day and all the children were waiting in nervous anticipation for the night.



Junior Annual Day was held in the dining hall, with a beautifully painted nature scene as a backdrop. Parents 'awed' and 'ahhed' in pride as they watched their children on stage. The children from Mango acted out a poem they had learnt in class whilst Orange class children danced in a Japanese style, fully dressed in kimono. Continuing on with their Project Day topic, Neem did a play all about coconut trees and sang a song about the uses of coconut. Peepal impressed the audience with their cookery skills, by demonstrating how to make Sambar through dance and song. Jamun did spectacularly with their rendition of the Three Little Pigs using many Indian languages, this related to their Project Day topic of 'States of India.' The confusion due to the combination of all the different lan-



guages was a source of great hilarity and the play was enjoyed by everyone.

The following day, it was the seniors turn to take to the stage. With mixed class groups, they showcased an evening of performance. This included a wonderful Tamil Street play about targeting problems with the environment, as well as astounding Bharathanatyam dance drama describing the mythology on the origins of the Cauveri river in Tamil Nadu. Our two volunteers from England, Nuala and Caitlin, showed Scottish ceilidh dance. In addition they performed an adapted version of 'Swami and friends,' a fisherman dance and a sketch about mythical creatures. All the children performed magnificently, their lengthy rehearsals certainly paid off as the audience was suitably impressed.



Dance Workshop—May 2013

A week of intense dance is now a regular summer feature at Vidya Vanam organized by Karuna Sagari. The children love the music and the dance and it is therefore not surprising that students even think of the arts—dance and music as their passion which they want to pursue. This is reflected in Manoj's comments (page 2).

'Every morning at 7 o'clock we had theory class before breakfast and then dancing,' 11 year old Divya, Krishna group, reflects fondly on her time at the dance camp held during the summer. With about twenty students from Vidya Vanam and more from BNN Coimbatore, Vidya Vanam was full to the brim with budding Bharathanatyam dancers. The children spent a week in Anaikatti and a week in Coimbatore, not only learning dance but also having workshops on pottery, temple architecture, fundamental steps of taekwondo, gardening and garland making. In fact, there was only 45 minutes of dance class each day as the workshop aimed to provide a more holistic view of the fine arts and practice of Bharathanatyam. The taekwondo was definitely a highlight for Gopi Krishna, who I've seen practicing his moves in the playground at lunch time!

All the children commented on how nice it was to interact with other dance students from Coimbatore as they rotated activities in mixed groups. They were also able to share their local knowledge with the teachers, by going for walks in the surrounding hills in the evening. One of the highlights of the summer camp was certainly the trip to Perur Temple in Coimbatore. The children were lucky enough to witness a small festival where Karuna was performing.

The most fascinating feature of the workshop has been the interest many of the boys have had to dance. They view this as an art form which is novel and not exclusive for girls. The profile of Manoj and his desires to be a dancer, (page 2) emphasizes this point even more.

My reflection on Vidya Vanam—Sarah E. Webb

(Sarah Webb was a volunteer teacher from Bozeman Montana US. She was class teacher for the Kaveri group).



I have now officially been back in the US for a month. “How was India?” seems to be a consistent question that permeates my conversations on a daily basis. While the answer is often somewhat superficial—“India was amazing”—this question has prompted a process of reflection, consideration of the memories and events that made my experience in India so unique and genuine. In many ways, my reflection of India has been isolated into a series of snapshots, each of which represents a memory that has been permanently inscribed into my mind: reminders of the inspiration, challenges and love that characterized this past year.

The first vivid memory that I have of the students of Vidya Vanam was on my first day of teaching. When I entered the newly built Science Classroom in the senior school, there was an obvious wave of excitement. I was swarmed by thirty two smiling faces, each of which eagerly shouted her name for me to hear. By the end of the day, the excitement had not yet worn off—the smiles only grew as I started to become acquainted with my students. While the first day of school is always exciting for a child, the excitement of these students was unique: it was a genuine welcoming into a family, an open armed hug defined by a trust that only grew throughout the year.

I think that if I had to isolate the main characteristic that stood out to me at Vidya Vanam it would be dedication: the dedication of the Vidya Vanam teachers to providing quality education; the dedication of the Vidya Vanam directors to the betterment of educational access in tribal and underprivileged areas. Though, perhaps most obviously, the dedication of the students at Vidya Vanam stood out to me. Their perseverance through immense difficulty was a major source of inspiration to me throughout the past year: their ability to come to school with a smile on their faces, eager to learn. The students at Vidya Vanam demonstrate a genuine passion for learning, a desire to know more about the world around them, to better the skills that they already have, and to make an impact on the world that they live in. It is a passion that is unparalleled—unique to the environment cultivated at Vidya Vanam.



The accomplishment made by every child at the school throughout this past year is immense: they acquired English skills, confidence, determination and personality development, was breathtaking. I am proud of each of these students for their commitment to both their education and betterment of their communities. I walk away with hope because these children represent the fu-

ture of India, the leadership of their generation. While they will be faced with the obvious problems of modern society—climate change, overpopulation, sustainable energy, human rights—I am more than confident that their dedication, passion and creativity will lend the needed solutions. Finally, I walk away with love. I walk away with a love of Anaikatti, Tamil Nadu and India; a love of teaching and the processes involved in education; and most importantly, a love for each individual that comprises the ever-changing, always-welcoming family of Vidya Vanam. As we would say in Tamil, “Poitu Varen.” I will go, and come, because good-bye is never permanent.

[Prema Rangachary notes: I am missing Sarah and her feisty and inexhaustible energy. Her parents friends and her country should be proud of what 22 year old can do in one

short year. All I can say, “keep your fires of passion burning and visit us as often as you can!”]

You can gleam more on Sarah’s journey and experiences in India by visiting her blogsite; swebbin-india.wordpress.com





WALK-A-THON
to benefit
VIDYA
VANAM

As a Junior (11th grade) at Westlake High School, I was introduced to the mission of Vidya Vanam this year. As I enter my final year as a school Senior (12th grade in Sept 2013), I hold a special place in my heart for Vidya Vanam.

On Saturday, June 8, 2013, I organized a Walk-a-thon in support of Vidya Vanam through the power of Westlake High School's Junior States of America club (JSA). JSA is a nation-wide organization in the United States that supports the education and practice of debate, public speaking, and leadership skills. One of JSA's main principles is to encourage students to have a voice and make a difference, which is extremely present in Westlake's chapter. As President of my school's JSA club, I lead the club's students to act enthusiastically in voicing their opinions on just changes that should be made throughout the world and to initiate the support needed for Vidya Vanam. I explained to them about the school, its mission & vision, and also how any small contribution will add up to a significant amount collectively. My efforts in helping Vidya Vanam served as an amazing experience. My time organizing the Walk-a-thon, coordinating with my school officials, making posters, distributing fliers, raising donations, and going above and beyond was well-spent, because I knew it was towards a cause I cherished and held dearly. "To ease another's heartache is to forget one's own" ... in this busy world, sometimes people need to be reminded as to how lucky they are compared to someone else...the flyers brought the awareness and people were kind to donate some funds. We are happy to say that we raised funds of R 1 lakh (\$1800) to benefit the children of Vidya Vanam.



Pooja with her walk team from West Lake

Marathoner for Vidya Vanam—a bio of Dinesh

Running for Education!



Dinesh Vajala lives in Illinois, USA and has run several marathons and half marathons in 2011 and 2012 to raise money for Vidya Vanam. Dinesh wanted to create awareness about education through his runs in some small way. He says, “most of us are fortunate to have received formal education. We now need to do work to help the millions of children who don’t have access to formal education. Vidya Vanam is doing great work to educate and encourage first-generation learners and running is one way in which I can contribute to this work.” Dinesh ran several marathons, half marathons and trail runs in Illinois and Wisconsin that includ-

ed the Chi-town, Chicago, Fox Valley, Devil’s Lake, Madison and Kenosha. He hopes to do more running this fall in Illinois and Wisconsin. We deeply appreciate his dedication to our cause.

