

Pudiyador Times

Issue 3
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Girls and Boys of Summer

Welcome to the Pudiador Times, World Cup Edition, just hot off the presses! We decided to kickoff the World Cup edition of the newsletter, chatting with little Miss R. She is a high school junior who has been attending Pudiador's after-school program since her 5th grade. Today, she is not only a straight-A student, but is also a teacher! Every day at Pudiador, Miss. R completes her own school-related work first and then teaches music, math, science and language to elementary level kids. This is a transcript of a recent conversation with her.

R: Hello Manickam *anna*! How are you?

Me: I am doing well. How are you doing? How were your summer holidays?

R: Great! I am very happy because I passed all of my 10th grade exams! I was very excited about the summer camp but I could only attend the first half, till May 15th.

Me: Did you go to visit your relatives at your village?

R: No, I had to undergo surgery to remove some extra bone-growth in my arm.

Me: Oh no! Was it painful?

R: Not too much. I am doing much better now - thanks for asking! I had to stay in the hospital for 2 weeks and so I missed the rest of the summer camp. But, I still had loads of fun in the first two weeks!

Me: What kind of fun? Tell me all about it!

R: Oh, there was so much going on! "Saving the Earth" was the theme for the summer camp, and there was lots of gardening and experimenting and painting and traveling. I helped in making two show-and-tell posters... you know I love working on them. Finally displaying all our work on the last day for everyone to see is always great!

Me: So, what was the next most fun thing that you did?

R: That's really hard to choose, *anna*. Hmm, let me see... Radha *akka* taught us more craft-making. We made cute handbags using paper, little fishes using leaves, we even learned to write our names calligraphically. Shilpa *akka* taught us to embroider on old clothes. Oh, we went to the Birla Planetarium and saw the whole Solar System. That was probably my most favorite! But I missed out on going to the Crocodile Park :(

Me: So nice! Don't worry, I am sure Prof. Narayanan will arrange another fun field trip to see the crocodiles. And what else...?

R: In keeping with the summer theme, we planted many trees in the neighborhood!

Me: Wow, I hope that you take good care of them! And when does school start for you?



R: Tomorrow! Oh, Radha *akka* is calling for me, I have to go help 3rd graders with their math homework.

Me: No problem, R. I will talk to you later. Good night and good luck!

R: Bye, Manickam *anna*!

With that, I invite you to our latest edition where you will get to know more about the exciting fun-filled month long summer camp and more...

Sincerely,

Manickam Narayanan
Co-founder



Featured Event—Summer Camp!

This is the much-awaited time of the year. The sun might beat down on us relentlessly, but who cares? The children don't have to go to school every day! Which means they get to spend all day at Pudiyaador, and all evening playing fun games! This year, the theme for the summer camp was "Save Mother Earth".

"I want to testify today about what I believe is a planetary emergency - a crisis that threatens the survival of our civilization and the habitability of the Earth."

- Al Gore

This summer, the children developed an understanding and awareness about the value of our beautiful planet Earth and its fragile ecosystem which is being affected by pollution, deforestation, and most recently, the gigantic oil spill. We hope to help our children take action, even if only in small steps, to do their bit for our planet. The one activity that was carried out with great vigor in each of our centers was 'tree planting'.

We inaugurated the 2010 Summer Camp by celebrating Earth Day on Apr 22nd. On this day, a 90 year old forest conservator visited us. He spoke to the children about the dismal current state of the forests today and the importance of plants and forests in saving the earth. Each child took a pledge to grow at least 10 plants this

summer! As a follow up activity, children were asked to bring commonly found seeds from their homes - like urad dal (split black gram), sesame, tomato, etc. Each child was allocated a small garden patch surrounding the center.



The children prepared their own patches by cleaning, digging, and watering them. They planted their seeds, took care of them, and watched as they germinated and started growing. Some patches grew slowly and some even died after a few days. The children were asked to identify those patches and investigate why these plants died. Such exercises helped the children gain practical understanding about how to care for plants. They learned how issues such as lack of sunlight (some seeds planted in the shade never sprouted), too much water (plants near the tap died) can affect the growth of different plants.



In a related activity, a yoga teacher who regularly visits our centers brought the seedling for a special tree called *ponga maram*. This tree is known for its medicinal properties, shady branches, and its ability to produce lots of oxygen. She helped the children plant this seedling in the center. All these plants are enjoying the undying attention of the children for the moment :)



Featured Event—Summer Camp! (cont'd)

In addition to gardening, the children enjoyed themselves engaging in various other activities, like they do every year. During the day, they spent their time indoors under the fan, learning and doing all sorts of things relating to the environment. In the evenings, when it got a bit cooler outside, they went out and played. Weekends were time for outings to broaden their horizons! They went on educational and fun trips to various places in and around the great city of Chennai. We could go on and on about it, but it's best communicated in pictures :)



Lets start dusting up!

If only climate change could be reversed in one summer! As an organization engaged in change, Pudiyaador's grass-roots approach to climate change is in taking baby steps to make every one of our children aware. We want to teach the children to act with foresight and with the sense of urgency that the health of our planet demands. Would you like to join our little movement and pitch in with your ideas and suggestions?

We will start with three specific and actionable initiatives that will be implemented at our centers throughout the rest of this year. Our goal is to encourage and help our children expand the initiative by taking it back to their schools and to other communities. And of course to eventually see them blossom into environmentally conscious citizens of the world!

Initiative 1

“Service begins at home”, so they say... We plan to educate our children about the various types of trash from home (kitchen trash, plastic containers and bags, cardboard boxes, etc.) and what can be done with them. The children will be taught to separate their trash into bio-degradable and non-bio-degradable to help the civic services to dispose them more effectively. Note: the Corporation of Chennai has made provision for residents to separate their trash appropriately. Also, recyclable paper and containers can be sold at recycling shops . What a great way to earn some pocket money!

Initiative 2

While responsible trash disposal is a good start for individuals, the effect can be phenomenal when it is translated into a community initiative! One such example is the construction of community

compost pits. Pudiyaador centers are planning on conducting an experimental activity wherein kids would be asked to dump kitchen trash from their homes into a compost pit near the centers. Each community has more than 50 families, so that could generate a lot of fodder for the pit! Once the compost is ready, it can be used to generate fertile soil for planting vegetable and flower gardens in the vicinity of the three community centers.

Initiative 3

Considering the socio-economic circumstances of our communities, it is easy for children to lose faith in the elected government system. However, Pudiyaador aims to make our kids aware of and appreciate the efforts of this sloth-like but capable giant. As part of the awareness campaign, we have planned future field trips to the city's water treatment facilities and garbage disposal plants.



Such visits will provide an opportunity to learn more about the technological and functional aspects of how the Corporation of Chennai serves its citizens. If you work for the city or you know officials from the Corporation of Chennai, please contact us to help arrange for such a field trip!

Your inputs

What do you think of our climate change initiatives? Do you have other ideas that can be implemented in our centers. Do you know other people or organizations with whom we can collaborate? Write to us at:

pudiyaador-newsletter@googlegroups.com

We would love to hear from you!



Second Quarter Highlights

APRIL

Field trip to make friends with the rowdy reptiles at the Crocodile Bank

Celebrating Earth Hour by kids convincing their communities to power down for 60 minutes

Full moon astronomy session at the roof-top observatory :)

MAY

Tree planting, craft -making, dancing, science projects... lots of fun!

Visiting the world's largest banyan tree at the Theosophical Society!

Watching the process of making electric guitars at a music factory

Getting to know the solar system and its family at the Birla Planetarium

JUNE

Annual medical and dental check-ups for the kids before getting back to school

Making posters to capture the summer theme of saving the planet

Handy-craft! Henna workshop for kids and mothers



Meet our student organizations

Just as *"No man is an island, entire of itself."*, no organization is an island either! PudiyaDor is fortunate to work with many organizations that understand our philosophy and help us achieve its mission. As a token of our deepest appreciation and gratitude to all the organizations we collaborate with, we'd like to feature the very special kind—student organizations!

innerPACE

They speak different languages, are from different socio-economic backgrounds, and follow different career paths. However, this diverse bunch definitely has two things in common - they are part of a University of Michigan student organization at Ann Arbor and they are inordinately passionate about the empowerment of the underprivileged. innerPACE (also known as iP) is the student chapter that provides creative direction to the PudiyaDor mission and activities. Join us in getting to know our innerPACE-setters.

As diverse as the group is, so are their individual paths to iP. Some were part of the original group that founded one or more PudiyaDor centers in India, and they helped establish iP as it exists today. Others became

involved through campus-wide events held by iP. Still others just wandered in on meetings, decided that they liked what they saw, and stayed on.

innerPACErs consider iP as a forum to generate ideas for PudiyaDor, actively engage in fundraising efforts, and spread the word about PudiyaDor among the local community in Ann Arbor and elsewhere. In short, they function as a knowledge and resource center and are a big part of energizing the work that PudiyaDor does.



The recent summer camp is a good example of the iP focus. The PudiyaDor ground team requested iP to develop an activity plan spanning 140 kids, 4 weeks and a central theme - saving the planet. After several iP



This is the current iP team. Several senior members who have left the campus still work with iP remotely.

brainstorming sessions, the initial concept blossomed - each week would deal with a different aspect of the overall theme filled with hands-on activities, field trips, role-play, arts, games, and education about the specific sub-themes. In their most detail-oriented role since their inception, iP also planned the weekly schedules and coordinated with field staff to implement the concept.

Communication was a challenge, they acknowledge, as was coordinating details half-way across the world. They overcame these roadblocks by burning up the phone lines and choking University bandwidth, tweaking plans



Meet our organizations (cont'd)

to adapt to ground needs, calling on favors from friends and families, and most importantly by always being available.

Now after a productive, enjoyable and challenging summer, the iP members say that this camp has definitely met and exceeded all of their goals and expectations. Moreover, some of the activities that were not implemented due to logistics issues will now be taken up by the ground team during the rest of the year at the centers.

Over the next couple of months, several iP members are traveling to Chennai to visit their families and their extended Pudiyaдор family of kids! iP is also working on creating a set of metrics to measure the impact of the Pudiyaдор activities on the community.

To perform better in their current and future roles, iP is also involved in establishing a feedback system with the Pudiyaдор community—children, staff, and volunteers - through the use of more sophisticated technology such as video conferencing, website development, and photography workshops. Here's the bottom line:

They are imaginative. They are creative. They are visionaries. They are innerPACE!

Society of Women Engineers

The Society for Women Engineers (SWE) is a non-profit educational service organization at the University of Michigan with a long history of collaboration with Pudiyaдор. They have contributed enormously to several of our fund-raising initiatives.



This past December, the SWE organized their annual fund-raising event *Mr. Engineer* to raise money and awareness for Pudiyaдор. Fifteen engineers from different student societies competed for the title of *Mr. Engineer 2010* by selling tickets and raising donations, performing in a talent contest, answering brainteasers, and reasoning through questions on ethics and morality.

Among the judges were Dean Munson of the College of Engineering and Malvika Bhatia, a representative from innerPACE. An audience

of over 400 people cheered on the contestants and raised over \$3800 for our cause! SWE also supported us last year by donating over \$2000 in proceeds from the Mr. Engineer event in December 2008.

SWE hosted an activity seminar in which participants made individual science kits to send to the Pudiyaдор children in India. The children absolutely loved them!

SWE at the University of Michigan also holds events that benefit many other organizations on campus and around Ann Arbor. They are a cherished friend to Pudiyaдор and we are proud of our association with them.

For more information on the Society for Women Engineers, please email swe.info@umich.edu or visit their website at www.swe.engin.umich.edu.



How can you help?

As you were getting acquainted with the various Pudiador activities and our progress this quarter, have you been wondering what *you* can do to help? If so, you are at the right spot and we are very excited to have you on board. You can get more involved with Pudiador and our activities in a variety of ways by volunteering your time or by donating money and resources.



If you live in or are visiting the Chennai-area, we would love it if you can volunteer your time with our children. You can help them with their school work, coordinate and/or participate in a field trip or hold one or more sports, art, cultural or individual development sessions.

Your interactions can be regular daily, weekly or monthly events (like providing academic help, teaching them spoken English or taking them on field trips) or you can schedule stand-alone events depending on your availability. Our volunteers typically come up with fantastic ideas to enrich the children's lives through fun and educational activities. You are also more than welcome if you would like to interact with the parents and share your knowledge and/or experiences with them.



If you are unable to make a time commitment and instead you are looking for other avenues to be engaged with Pudiador's efforts, we welcome your donations. You can make a one-time donation or pledge a fixed amount every month. We are set up on [Paypal](#) and we also

accept all other forms of donation - cash, cheque, cashier's cheque, etc. Pudiador is a 501(c)(3) organization and all donations are tax-exempt.



One way to easily multiply your monetary contributions to Pudiador -or any other charitable organization that you support, for that matter- is to contact your HR department to see if your place of employment sponsors a corporate matching grants program. If your company has such a program, all you would have to do is, fill out the appropriate form and forward it on to us along with your contribution. We will then fill out our details and other requested information and send the form back to your HR. This is a simple, yet effective way to augment and even double your donations and we thank you for looking into it.

At Pudiador, we are completely driven and sustained by our volunteers and donors. Without your commitment of time, money and other resources, our activities, our goals and even our organization, will be but a dream. We sincerely thank you for all your support and generosity.

We would love your feedback!

Our newsletter team would love to hear from you—after all, you are the reason our team exists! Please let us know what we can do to make this newsletter more informative and enjoyable. Or just drop in a line to say hello :)

pudiador-newsletter@googlegroups.com

If you are looking for specific needs you would like to help with, we are planning to:

Increase our collection of educational kits.

We are looking for new or used educational aids that would foster the imagination of our children—anything from abacus to microscopes, word games to complex science kits.

Extend regular medical services at centers.

We need medical professionals to volunteer their time, services and supplies to our children. We can use your help whether you are able to make a regular or single time or resource commitment.

Revamp computers that are over 8 years old

and are riddled with hardware issues. Please think of us if you are looking to replace your older laptops or have the resources to donate new ones.

Enable our children to hone musical abilities.

There is a need for two *Veenas* and two *Sitars* to help with our music classes and for the kids to practice and perform on.

Expand our Audio/Video library.

We are always on the lookout for good audio/video materials for example, National Geographic/Discovery/History Channel features on DVD/Video CD to supplement the children's educational and extra-curricular needs.

If you are able to help out in any of the ways detailed above, please contact us at

pudiador-newsletter@googlegroups.com

