

Auroville, May 2017

Dear Friends and Donors,

Deepam got 25!



It is almost unbelievable that Deepam started small in 1992 and developed step by step into a significant therapy center. We were celebrating over two days with an open house and our team gave its best to make this a wonderful event. Former students, volunteers and employees had been invited and our children got lots of applause for their amazing performance. Countless people have contributed to Deepam's development and we most heartily thank everybody who has helped through work or financial contribution.

Mauna, Angelika's neighbor, published the following text in the weekly Auroville news bulletin: *"Thank you, Deepam team! I want to express my very sincere admiration for what Angelika has created for*

differently-abled children from Auroville and surrounding villages. Having started 25 years ago under the tamarind trees in Kuilyapalayam, she managed to have the Deepam 'Light' centre grow, mature and expand through hard work, persistent fundraising and by partnering years ago with co-executive Selvi and other skilful individuals, therapists, teachers and volunteers. The singing, dance and yoga performances by some of the pupils during the recent 25-year celebration were testimony to the great care and time that must have gone into these and to the patient, loving relationship between adults and children."

Deepam's Vocational Training Center (DVTC):



Cathy, who is in charge of the training-programme writes: *“We inaugurated the DVTC on the 25th anniversary of Deepam. Many people were surprised to discover this inviting 100 sq.m. building which now welcomes our students. We would like to thank SAIER, the overall school-organisation of Auroville, for offering this additional space to us. The renovation work lasted several months: painting of the high walls, replacing the mosquito-mesh of the windows, providing a water-connection for washing hands and tools, and redoing the electrical set-up. A magnificent banyan tree provides shade and we are still busy with landscaping and planting the garden. Also, we are in the process of furnishing the building for our requirements. 13 students with special needs come regularly to deepen their abilities in making handicrafts. I guide them towards good quality work and they find great pleasure in producing beautiful earrings, bracelets, hair-clips, key-rings, paper boxes, candles, greeting cards, all kinds of macramé-knotted decoration and wood-work. The next step will be that they learn to organize the work process on their own. It is also important for them to share the responsibility for materials and tools. This is a new challenge for Deepam!”*

They left too early:

Last year we reported about Subhashini, who had a fast-growing, malignant brain-tumour which was partially removed by surgery. After some months of suffering and very reduced life-quality, she left her body in February at only 12 years of age. We will never forget her wonderful presence. Soon after, within three weeks, two fathers of our children committed suicide. Especially sad is that Nandini and Akash, being both 13 years old with severe special needs, are working so hard to improve their skills, now also have to cope with this loss. We are confronted with so many families where the burden of raising the children is shouldered by the mothers alone!

These four keep us busy:

We would like to introduce four children to you who, though quite different in their personalities, have in common that they are charming and sweet natured, easily distracted and disturb the others in the group. For our team members it is a challenge to integrate these children into the schedule of the daycare programme with different learning activities. Often we do not have “enough hands” to control the sudden outbursts of these students – they need a lot of extra attention and most of the time one attendant to personally cater to them.



Dinesh Karthik is 7 years old and needs to wear strong hearing aids as he was born with severe hearing loss. When his parents brought him as a small child to Deepam, we recommended a school for hearing impaired children in the town of Pondicherry with a strict training-programme that aims to integrate students into mainstream schools. Unfortunately this did not work for Dinesh as he is unable to sit quietly. His parents, who are eager to provide their son good options, brought him back to Deepam only after no other school would take him. Dinesh is able to read and write basic Tamil and receives speech-therapy and education at Deepam. As he is constantly fidgeting, to the extent that he falls from stools during classes, we engage him in physical tasks, such as little garden jobs and we take him to the swimming pool and for therapeutic horse riding. In the group he is still quite naughty and deliberately disturbs, e.g. by pinching others.

Nivetha is delayed in her mental development and has a severe attention deficit syndrome. She is under medication for her seizure disorder. Some years ago she came for an assessment at Deepam, but the family did not follow our recommendations. They tried to integrate Nivetha into mainstream schooling, which did not work out as she requires a lot more extra care. Now, eleven years old, she came back to us. She is able to read and copy simple Tamil sentences, numbers she manages up to 100 – we are teaching her simple maths in one to one sessions. Nivetha is a bundle of energy with a very strong voice. She loves to sing, but not in tune with the others. She is not shy and quite self-confident, though we find her behaviour and her way of speaking rough. Our team observes her mood-swings and we are still assessing her family situation. Gradually we are integrating Nivetha into the group where she makes steady progress. We hope that soon the tranquillizer medication which she is taking will not be required anymore.

Chandru is a nine year old boy, who was born with Down Syndrome. He has been coming to Deepam for physio- and speech-therapy since he was 1.5 years old. He loves puzzles, is able to distinguish basic colours and can meanwhile count up to 10. In individual sessions Chandru is quite attentive, but in the group he is restless and disruptive. Chandru is cute - children as well as adults often smile when he is doing silly and provocative things, such as making faces, and so his naughty behaviour has become a habit. He even passes urine in his pants the moment somebody says “no” to him. Unfortunately, his parents are but little educated and adequate family support is lacking, e.g. he doesn’t get encouraged to eat or to dress on his own. As Chandru's mental skills are quite low, we find it even more important to guide him to develop appropriate social behaviour.

Kishore is a sweet looking 12 year old boy. At first sight one would think he is absolutely normal – looking closer one perceives that he is extremely restless and a non-stop talker. Kishore attended earlier a school in town – though his parents had shelled out a lot of money for his education, the programme was poor and there were few teachers for many students. At Deepam Kishore integrated socially quickly into the group. He is a slow learner and mentally on the level of a small child. Still he is not able to dress himself alone. Coordination exercises are a big challenge for him and it is hard for him to finish an activity. Though he is has anti-epileptic medication, we are observing if he is dreaming or if he has “absences”. We plan to refer him to a specialist for further investigation.

Our children and team send you greetings from a tropical summer with record temperatures!

Kind regards,

Angelika & Selvi

