Stree Soukhyaa project delivers hygiene
Project to make inexpensive sanitary napkins has benefited thousands

Sunita Rathore 9928335399

Udaipur, Rajasthan: The Art of Living workshops conducted in Tinao and Namindeshma villages in Udaipur District, Rajasthan have given women there financial independence.

The local women were enthusiastic about getting trained in some work that could make them independent financially, and Art of Living faculty Jitu Bala trained them in stitching and knitting.

After getting trained, these women showcased their products at some stalls in a fair organised at Udaipur, and during Sri Sri’s visit. The women had learnt the techniques and were educated on self-esteem, said Art of Living workshop helped to give them the confidence and make them independent.

Sunita Rathore, 33, was one of the women who recently attended the workshop. She said, “Now I have an income. I could not earn earlier. Even when I had some income, I used to work as a maidservant. Now I have my own home and we have a car.”

On Diwali, reaching out to the poor

Kumlin English 09040526503

Slichtar, Assam: Wheat four (Atta) and coconuts are distributed on the occasion of Chhath Puja, and the local officials are planning to distribute the items. The volunteers also collected clothes and distributed them to the residents of Shyamrup village during Durga Puja. They gave gifts and other items to the residents of Art of Living programmes for nearly 200 villagers.

Heavy rainfall and flooded roads did not deter these volunteers from reaching out to the needy. They succeeded in delivering the task, said Art of Living teacher and project coordinator Kankanra Nath (9435170499).

Maharashtra, villages learn how to store rain water

Villagers organized to construct dams, canals; 50,000 benefited

Rakesh Patil & Gajan Ganpat 9834558697

Jalgaon, Maharashtra: Some villagers of Makansi, a dominant caste, feared a water crisis till volunteers of Art of Living found a permanent solution. The problem was solved in Dharana and seven other villages when these volunteers dug 400 borewells and canals to increase ground water level and encourage water flow.

Laurni Tai and Dr. Ranjana organized a seminar in the village to discuss solutions to the problem and several participants came up with valid suggestions. A committee was formed to implement the ideas. Some of the villagers collected donations to execute the work.

While the residents of Mussalai paid for diesel, the local branch of Rotary Club donated JCB machines. The work was completed in 20 days and the residents are now preparing to construct a block to store rain water.

Nature’s wealth: (Left to right) Rain water flowing in canals; Dr Ranjana addressing the villagers in a seminar on how to collect and store rainwater

The irrigation plan was implemented in seven other villages – Bagani, Guo, Jukhrwa, Aakai, Wardi, Gadhgaon, Sunnd, Wadugad. The residents have now found a permanent solution to the persistent water problem.

Project Coordinator: Dr Ranjana 9922661363

Women gain financial security

Empowerment: Gogunda women trained in knitting and sewing

Sunita Pathar 9929852389

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Health empowerment: Set up as part of 5H program, unit at Mohi village in Maharashtra makes sanitary napkins

The Art of Living workshop helped them to win the hearts and trust of these women. They trained Art of Living teacher Amol Yevle in making sanitary napkins.

Mrs. and Mr. Poli said, “We formed a self-help group ‘Stree Soukhyaa’ in November 2013. Presentations were given to girls studying in classes 8th to 12th. We distributed sanitary napkin packets to the students. Slowly, they started understanding the importance of hygiene, and we trained women from six villages. Overall, 1,000 women have been benefited from the project and several others have taken up this work as a means of employment.”

VidyaGan Mahal Vidyut Peeth provided the required financial help in setting up a manufacturing unit for sanitary napkins. Now, more than half of the women in and around Mohi have worked over to hygienic living, and are making plans to increase production and spread the knowledge.

Project Coordinator: Amol Yevle 9422080879

Conflict over water resolved in TN village

Guruscharan Ambreshvar 09042973863

Coimbatore, Tamilnadu: After waiting patiently for 32 years, the villagers of Kothavadi now have enough water for their daily use. Water scarcity was a major problem for the residents because of the geographical location of the village. The excess water from Amravathi dam was distributed to two villages (Kothavadi and Dettupaddi), but frequent clashes between them made Kothavadi the loser.

The situation changed after Art of Living adopted the village and implemented various programmes. YuvaChayana Arul Murugan organised Nav Chetna initiates (Art of Living’s free programme), and encouraged planting of trees apart from creating awareness about toilets.

Mohanasundaram, Principal of Janardan Village, helped them to contact the local MLA, and as per his instructions, they wrote a letter and got signatures of the villagers. They submitted this letter to the concerned authorities and also convinced the residents of Dettupaddi to provide water to Kothavadi village.

Now, final arrangements are being made to clear the path, and the farmers of Kothavadi will soon be watering their crops. The Amravathi dam has adequate water for both the villages. After 1992, the check dams are filled with water only the year end or the residents of the village consider it a blessing of the local priests.

Karanpumari, a villager from Kothavadi said, “We have no water facility for years. Now we have municipal water supply. But now we are very happy that Art of Living will continue to bring water to our village.”

Volunteer Arul Murugan can be reached at 04875595291

Chhattisgarh culture on show

Ram Ashesh 9003553932

Bangalore, Karnataka: Chhattisgarh was carved out of Madhya Pradesh to become the 28th state of India on November 1, 2000. Known as the rice bowl of India, the state offers a distinct, rich cultural and tribal heritage.

Celebrating a Mahotsav outside Chhattisgarh for the first time, The Art of Living International Center became the stage for a sports tournament and cultural performances from November 1-4. Despite Naxal influence, the state has been able to preserve some of its interesting culture. The main aim of this Mahotsav was to showcase this culture to the world, spread the feeling of brotherhood and create a wave of spirituality.

Traditionally, the state is famous for kabaddi, and almost everyone plays it. To capture the spirit and energy of the game, 16 teams of the state, including three women teams, participated in a tournament that was held here. The men’s team from Dinda Raipur, with national-level players, won the first place. Among the women, the first place was awarded to a team from Satpur. The girls danced, were articulate and had a good wish for the visitors.

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Project Coordinator: Dr Ranjana 9922661363
Jammu flood victims receive timely help and relief

Bharat Bishan Pull

Jammu & Kashmir: On September 7, 2014, Jammu and Kashmir was ravaged by floods due to heavy rainfall. Around two lakh people were badly affected and many villagers in the region did not have food, shelter, and other basic amenities. More than a month has gone by and their pain has subsided; the people are still suffering and are in deep anguish.

These rural areas basically thrive on agricultural output that fulfills both their family needs and helps them to cater to the basic demands of their residents who have lost most of their life-long savings and valuable belongings, including their houses, crops, cattle and fodder. Such heavy losses have put the villagers under immense emotional and psychological stress.

Art of Living believes in helping the needy and spreading happiness. A group of 500 villagers distributed solar lights in two districts of Jammu and Kashmir. More than 500 lights were distributed and were collected in villages where electricity failed because of the recent floods, and Bhagtapur, Jammu district, was one of the beneficiaries.

Earlier this month, 32 families of the village got solar lights distributed by Art of Living. They are extremely happy to receive them. Janak Singh, a resident of Reasi district said he was looking forward to use the lighting as their village was dark until now.

Project Coordinator Ashok Gedia 0962279743

Snacks distributed to the prisoners

Sanjivani Warkade 0891225109

Paonpatt, Haryana: Art of Living volunteers distributed snacks distributed to the prisoners. The Art of Living volunteers at Paonpatt, Haryana, on the occasion of Diwali, distributed snacks to the prisoners. Art of Living volunteers Amran, Alok, Suresh, Praveet, Vatsal, Chorai and Smriti also helped the inmates.

Project Coordinator: Vivekananda Tikkadar 09733222028

Light a Home project spreads happiness in J&K

Ashok Gedia: 09622070743

Jammu, Jammu & Kashmir: As part of the ‘Light a home’ project, Art of Living’s Rural Development Programme Trust distributed solar lights in two districts of Jammu and Kashmir. More than 500 lights were distributed and were collected in villages where electricity failed because of the recent floods. Bhagtapur, Jammu district, was one of the beneficiaries.

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Helping hand: Villagers from various parts of Reasi district after receiving solar lights

Free from clasp of addiction

Arpit Vyas 09623273585

Changi, Arunachal Pradesh: Addiction does not come alone but brings with it many other evils like stealing, lying and violence. Compared to de-addiction centers, Art of Living programmes have better cure rates. Art of Living programmes not only help addicts to give up the habit but also show a way ahead to a better life.

Mingtu Ngemu (36), a farmer from Hemis, had lost his self esteem and confidence, and the members of his family gave up on him. He had lost all hope of his future. This continued for 13 years, and he remained an addict of brown sugar, opium, heroin, smack and alcohol. Like many youngsters, Mingtu also wanted to be stylish and different. He wanted to experiment with new and adventurous things, to earn a good name among friends and to show off his thickness and strength. He soon got into addictions and realised much later that his experiments were a cage for him and he was a slave to these addictions. He started living with his family and also took money from his friends and relatives to buy drugs.

Mingtu said, “My family was ashamed of me. My parents tried to hide my weaknesses from our relatives. I got married in 2008, and I'm a father now. Things worsened when the entire money I earned was spent on my addictions. This led to regular quarrels and there was total disharmony in my family.”

After spending four months at a rehabilitation center, Mingtu was induced into YLTP (Youth leadership training program). “My wife and sister-in-law brought a new hope of life into my life and I was completely cured. I found a new direction in life, and my focus shifted from drugs to social problems. After my own experience with drugs and alcohol, I have become an active member and volunteer of Art of Living workshops. I’m helping many others to get over their addictions.”

Mingtu Ngemu can be reached at 9436041009

Seminars educate adolescents on AIDS

Rajesh Kundi 07762272109

Malda, West Bengal: To cater to the health needs of residents at Parulia village, Habibpur block, Malda district, a group of 150 villagers along with Art of Living team of West Bengal organized a free medical camp recently. Around 165 people benefited from the one-day camp and the seminar on AIDS awareness conducted on 3rd of November.

Art of Living teacher Vivekananda Tikkadar Dr. Bidyut Sarkar took the initiative and organized the event. The camp started with a health check-up and preventive measures were provided to the participants. This was followed by an awareness seminar on AIDS and prevention of HIV infection. The event was a great success and many more are waiting for their turn.

Project coordinator Vivekananda Tikkadar 09733222028

Prevention is cure for HIV/AIDS

HARA is an Art of Living project that aims at spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS in areas where people are conservative and refrain from even talking about the disease. It was started in December 2008 by Art of Living founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

The programme concluded with a video session on HIV/AIDS and gave the participants ample opportunity to explore their health status. Most of them complained of respiratory ailments, urinary incontinence, anaemia, stomach problems, dental cavities, injuries, allergies and gastric problems. Art of Living volunteers Ramani Binawas and Pradeep Hansda and several others took part.

Project coordinator: Vivekananda Tikkadar 09733222028

Former HP chief minister finds Kriya a stress buster

Meenakshi Chauhan 09418483822

Himachal Pradesh: A village called Samserpur in Hamirpur district of Himachal Pradesh was the venue for a Rural Awareness Programme recently. As a native of this place, former Chief Minister Prof. Kumaar Dhumal graced the occasion and was present, along with his family members.

The former Chief Minister said his life was stressful before practising Sudarshan Kriya but he is relieved these days. He expressed regret that he had not taken it up earlier because of his busy schedule. Its regular practice refreshes the mind and body, he said, adding that it has now become a part of his daily routine. He said active participation in the programme and regular practice of Sudarshan Kriya will aid physical and mental healing.

Harbansand, a retired government employee who was taking medicines for high blood pressure, is now completely cured from the ailment. Vishal Ram, a daily wager said, “I had to buy medicines from Shimla and Chandigarh but after the practice, I do not need them anymore.”

Mingtu Ngemu

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**Solar lithium lamps light up 350 homes in Assam**

Mukesh Chapagain

09462171806

Dibrugarh, Assam: The Assam government, which has been working for a sustainable and profitable development of Indian farmers, has helped school children to a great extent, and even his children were using these lamps, added SRSRD Trustee Deepak Sharma.

Dibrugarh, Assam: The children of Gurak and Mukulganj in Assam saw light at night when Art of Living volunteers distributed solar lithium lamps to the villagers. About 350 homes in these tribal villages have benefited.

On this occasion, Swami Poornachaitanya, an Art of Living faculty, shared his experiences of social work in the area. He encouraged the locals to participate in the free Art of Living programs and benefit from them.

Assam's SRSRD [Sri Sri Rural Development Programme] coordinator Mausami Sharma said most villages in the state faced the same problem of electricity and the 'Light a Home' project is trying to bring light into the lives of the needy Students of the village are able to study using solar lithium lamps instead of kerosene lights, said Kailash Yadav of Bindaikata. The project has benefited the entire village, he added. A teacher of Village School who lives in Ward no. 9 where solar lithium lights were distributed said that this year's floods had affected the village and the recent pluvial distillation of the village infrastructure, and the roads were in a bad condition, he said. AoL's electrification programme has helped school children to a great extent, and even his children were using these lamps, he added.

**Art of Living team provides food for thousands of potential Indian Army recruits**

Arul Topa

09672273623

Beed, Maharashtra: Hundreds of youths who aspired to serve the Indian Army had come together for the selection process, and Art of Living appreciated their patriotism. Medical and fitness tests were conducted at the police headquarters grounds from Nov 1 to Nov 7. The participants had to stay in the campus for 30 hours, and did not have time to go out for food.

Art of Living volunteers supplied packed meals free of cost to all the applicants after discussing the matter with Abhay Sharma, Superintendent of Police, who in turn approached Colonel Vikram Dube (conducting the entire selection process, in charge of the selection on the behalf of army) for permission.

Throughout the week, about 600-800 applicants visited the campus every day from different parts of the state, especially from Pune, Beed, Nagpur, Osmanabad and Latur. The breakfast included biscuits, bananas and poha, and lunch comprised roti, rice, dal and vegetables. Mineral water was also provided.

This is important because a huge population depends on it for irrigation and drinking water. Construction of these wells will improve water supply throughout the year as it helps increase the ground water level. Nineteen more wells are being planned for the remaining villages of the state, and the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2015.

The completion of this project will ensure that river flow is regulated. It will also help in dealing with the problem of waterlogging in river basins, which is a huge crisis that Tamil Nadu is facing for the past several years.

Colonel Vikram Dube (conductor of the selection on the behalf of army) for permission.
Clean Pampa drive continues in season

Unnikrishnan V. 9843362216

Pathanamthitta, Kerala: Art of Living faculties and volunteers started an awareness drive at Sabarimala on 17 November, to implement the Clean Pampa project effectively. A batch of volunteers is now staying at Sabarimala and three of them took active part in the drive on the first day. The next batch of volunteers will stay for the next 10 days, and the drive will continue till 20 January.

Volunteers distributed pamphlets to pilgrims and prevented them from dumping garbage into the river and the surroundings. They carried information placards that highlighted the consequences of dumping used clothes into the river.

Rajesh, a pilgrim from Kolam, said, “This is my fifth visit to Sabarimala. So far, I’ve seen Pampa being used as a dump yard. For me, this was surprising to see the change. To maintain this, creating awareness among pilgrims is a must.”

Dinesh, “Mandala kalam” will attract pilgrims in large numbers to the temple and Pampa being used as a dump yard. This time I was surprised to see the change. To maintain this, creating awareness among pilgrims is a must.”

Arathi, Project Coordinator, Purushottam Wayal, 09423458983

Sports and toys bring smiles on children’s faces in Maharashtra

Antil Tupe 627329222

Partur, Maharashtra: Art of Living's unique initiative “Gift a smile to every child helps bridge the gap between the affluent and the needy. Students are not able to buy toys for their children as survival is their top priority. On the other hand, some wealthy students don't have enough space to keep toys in their homes. Art of Living volunteers collected about 300 toys from families living in cities and distributed among the children of nearby villages.

Children belonging to the villages of Shridhar Jawala and Khadiki celebrated a very special Diwali this year because they not only got toys but also learnt pranayama and meditation during the programme. Everyone appreciated the initiative.

Bright and young: Village kids receiving a toy after YLTP course

Veeravalli, 09577527519

Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh: The Hudhud cyclone had devastated Andhra Pradesh to such an extent that many rushed forward to help people. They provided relief to the flood-affected. Governments and NGOs also pitched in to help rebuild people’s lives.

Art of Living rural teacher A Ganganahara Rao and project coordinator respectively have planned one. Volunteers from different parts of Kerala arrived at Pampa to take part in this initiative.

The Devaswom Board is providing accommodation and food for the volunteers. The next batch of volunteers is expected to arrive on November 9th. Project Chairmain: Vava Suresh, 08547657520

Mandala Mandal in Vishakhapatnam district, said A Ganganahara Rao, coordinator for state art of living activities. Ganganahara Rao said several people came forward to help people but animals were getting neglected. This service has won appreciation, he said.

Mandala, Prashad President Ramakumari, an Art, volunteer, donated Rs.15 lakhs to Kothapalem village, said Sudhakar Veeravalli. Project Coordinator Sudhakar Veeravalli, 09833790840

Clean-up drive in Kerala

Unni Krishnan 9979525216

Alappuzha, Kerala: During his spare time, YLTP teacher Anis helped in cleaning up Mullathri Paromb, with the help of volunteers and local residents. Last weekend, more than 50 people took part in the drive.

After cleaning, they educated the villagers about the importance of hygiene and maintaining clean surroundings. Autokilaxath drivers also took active part in the drive.

The debris and waste materials collected were segregated and categorised before disposal. Biodegradable wastes were used for pipeline compost, and plastic materials were sent to the nearest recycling plant.

YLTP course inspires free school for children of Assam tea workers

Kumar Eknath 09833432430

Laduguri Kamrup, Assam: Most of the residents in Bordur Bagan, Laduguri Kamrup, Assam work in tea gardens. Geographically, the village is located on a fully arable area and the roads are not safe. There is only one government school nearby. Two kilometres away from the village, and most of the children are not able to join the school or continue studies.

After Art of Living’s Madan Das conducted the YLTP about 50 youth became volunteers and decided to start a school in the village. The organisation is providing books, mid-day meals and dresses to the students, along with imparting holistic education. The school now has 250 students, and some of them come from 10-12 nearby villages.

Madan Das, Art of Living teacher and project coordinator said approximately 150 habitants who participated in various Art of Living programmes.

They got together and acquired a plot at a central location placed with the consent of the habitants of the village. After the land was finalised, the residents extended support to construct the school. The villagers brought bamboo sticks and offered free labour to construct the classrooms. Several other volunteers from Guwahati came forward to support the project by donating construction material. The school was inaugurated in November 2010.

Nirmohkrish Risah, Village Pradhana, who is also president of the school board, says things have changed since the school started. Most of the children are going to school and their parents are more aware of the importance of education. They are interested in sending their children to school for the school is providing better education than the other government schools.

Akash Raghya, a nine-year-old child, said, “We are extremely happy to go to school. Our wish is to invite Sri Sri Ravi Shankar to our village and school.” Mrs. Rabi, Akash’s mother, said her child has changed a lot. Earlier, she was naughty and shy but now he shares whatever he learns every day, and has become more responsible. Madan Das said Roomi Purana, AID, state coordinator, extended all the support and guidance to make the school a big success. She helped in coordinating with Art of Living’s Bengaluru centre and in completing the procedures and formalities required to start the school. The volunteers who helped in constructing the school are Malala Bhattacharya, Sahba Butani and Sanmoi Borua.

Project coordinator: Modan Das, 9577527319

Knowledge service: Over 250 children study at the school in Bordur Bagan village

Animals who bore the brunt of Hudhud saved by Art of Living

Sudhakar Veeravalli 09857379040

Wadhavapurn, Visakhapatnam: Art of Living volunteers have carried out efforts to feed all the cattle in four villages – Kothapalem and Rammagaram villages in Vamsanelli Mandal, and Nagalapally and Ummalada of Munagapaka Mandal in Visakhapatnam district. They got together and acquired a plot at a central located place with the support and guidance to make the school a big success. She helped in coordinating with Art of Living’s Bengaluru centre and in completing the procedures and formalities required to start the school. The volunteers who helped in constructing the school are Malala Bhattacharya, Sahba Butani and Sanmoi Borua.

Feeding people: Cattle feed being supplied to residents of four villages

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Dry temple pond gets 15 ft of water as part of Kumudvathi rejuvenation

Dilip Kumar Koli 09335497006

Bangalore, Karnataka: Nine staff members and 42 students of Soundarya PU College, Bangalore have transformed a 500-year-old defunct kalyani (temple pond) attached to the Kashi Vishwanatha temple of Thayamangudu village, in the Kummadi basin, into a water body. The pond, which was a dumping ground for plastic and garbage, and a breeding ground for waterfowl, now has water up to 15 feet.

As part of a camp organized under the National Service Scheme (NSS), the students travelled about 15 km from Bangalore to the nearby Dasanagaram lake. On arrival, they worked tirelessly on the project. Within eight hours, they cleared the garbage and silt, and removed the weeds to transform the kalyani.

The initiative came from the students as part of the college’s Youth Leadership Training Programme (YLTP). Kumar H, principal of the college and Secretary of Soundarya Foundation’s Gopala Krishna had informed them about the poor condition of the kalyani. “The staff and students of our college decided to give it a facelift,” Kumar said.

However, the task turned out to be daunting, he said. The kalyani was 80-feet deep and had steep walls, and it was dangerous for the students to work on it as they are hardly in their 16s and 17s. At about nine in the morning, the group of students got down to work using sickles, ropes, buckets and other equipment. “Only one local villager, Shivanna, joined us. Tahk panchayat president Jagadish helped us by organizing tractors to ferry silt and garbage,” Kumar said. While the students cleared the garbage by sweeping the steps of the kalyani, Shivanna and the college staff scaled down the 80-feet wall and cleared the branches and other waste materials. Though the locals objected to the dumping of silt near the temple, the entire group, including Naik, NSS co-ordinator of the college inspired the students to continue the work. A few students got down to work on the garbage from the bottom of the kalyani, and a few others helped remove it using ropes. Subsequently, the silt and debris were loaded onto tractors to be removed for dumping. “Since it had rained the previous day it was easy to remove the silt completely,” said Peraya Naik.

The entire team of volunteers panicked for a few minutes when a bee hive was disturbed and they got swarmed by bees. But a few stings did not deter them from completing the cleaning operation successfully.

Almost 12 tractor-laden of garbage and silt were removed, which comprised plastic, empty tetra packs and other waste materials. “After a small lunch break we resumed work and were able to complete the work by 5 p.m. When we touched the bottom, we found ground water,” Naik said. The students and staff of the college urged the temple trust and local panchayat officials to keep the lake clean.

Project coordinator: Chandrakant 09448530847

Spiritual leader inspired to take up path of service in Himachal

After doing Art of Living, Swami Ramkrishna becomes pradhan

Meenakshi Chauhan 09318483822

Una, Himachal Pradesh: If you love God, you will love your fellow beings, said Swami Ramkrishna and his followers are doing selfless service at an ashram in Kuthar Khurd, Una district, Himachal Pradesh. After undergoing the Youth Leadership Training Programme (YLTP) in 2008, he was inspired to serve society and transformed the hidden qualities of an individual. One who has an inclination to learn can be inspired to serve society and worked on it as they are hardly in their 16s and 17s.

Swami Ramkrishna said, “I wanted to establish branches of the ashram to make it more popular. But after undergoing the YLTP, and with the inspiration of Sri Sri, I have understood that spiritualism comes from serving the society and transforming the lives of people.” Earlier, he had thought that spirituality is nothing but abandoning the society and keeping away from society’s problems. But with inspiration from Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, he realised that the real essence of spirituality is in serving the society, said Ramkrishna, panchayat pradhan of Kuthar Khurd.

Under the guidance of YLTP teachers Uday Sharma and Savita Sharma, he joined the Art of Living programme, which gave him direction. He freed him from stress, and he wanted others also to experience this freedom. He even took physical and mental training. Till now, 80 per cent of the villagers have benefitted from Art of Living programmes. He and 100 per cent of the children, and youth, and 80 per cent of the adults take part in group singing and meditation regularly.

This brought inner peace to the villagers and they developed a feeling of responsibility towards the society as well. The women came forward to clean up the village, and also started two Mahila Mandalis (women’s groups), which took the responsibility of cleaning of the village on a regular basis. Women, and children and youth take part enthusiastically to clean the streets every week. The panchayat received the Nirmal Gram Puraskar from the President of India in 2011.

Ravinder Ravi, Irrigation Min- ister of Himachal Pradesh, honored Swami Ramkrishna on 15th August 2010 with a certificate from Swathya Aur Purwar Kalan Vishakh for making families collect the highest number of smart cards in the panchayat. Smart card holders living below the poverty line get free health check-ups and medical facilities at government hospitals in the state. In his panchayat, almost all RPL (Below poverty line) families earned smart cards.

Forty students have enrolled for the development activities of Art of Living’s computer centre. Earlier, they had to go 4-5 kilometers away to get computer education, and most of them were not able to afford it. Even some of the schools here are not equipped to impart such education. But now everyone has easy access to computer education, and anyone who has an inclination to learn can join the courses.

Exemplary: (left to right) Nirmal gram puraskaar for Kuthar Khurd from president of India in 2011; Art of Living computer training centre; Swami Ramkrishna (left)

Many of the houses in the village did not have toilets, and Ramkrishna inspired the villagers to build them on their own. Now, all the families in the panchayat have toilets. In the local elections held in 2011, villagers proposed Ramkrishna’s name for the Pradhan’s post. He became the first unopposed Pradhan of the village. Though the government had sanctioned money for street lights sometime ago, no one took the initiative for implementing it. After Ramkrishna became the Pradhan, he promptly completed the work and also installed more lights.

The roads of the village have also been re-laid, thanks to the Pradhan’s initiative. Many people were reluctant to giving a ‘no objection certificate’ to build streets in the village as it convinced every one and made them understand the importance of roads for the village.

Surendranagar, Gujarat: 1600 students of NRP School are taught breathing exercises. Project co-ordinator Mehta Kishandas 09426223003

Intensive youth training at Purulia

Course in West Bengal

Rajesh Kundu 07762873289

Purulia, West Bengal: Youth form the backbone of a nation, and its strength can be determined with their presence. Youth leadership training programme brings out the hidden qualities of an individual. One such programme, conducted on the occasion of Navaratri, concluded on 14th October, 2014, at ManasSarovor hotel in Purulia district, West Bengal.

Under the guidance of Shir Chhibra Mahato and Tamayo Maiti, 26 participants underwent intense training at the programme, apart from physical exercise, leadership qualities and communication skills were taught. This will not only help them to lead better lives but also initiate them to work for the welfare of their communities.

Course participants were grateful to the teachers and the organisation for transforming their lives through the programme. The various techniques taught were effective in bringing relief to the participants from stress, anxiety and confusion. Now, they feel more confident and have developed better public speaking and communication skills.

Chamrajnagar, Karnataka: Forest guards have to walk through the dangerous woods adjoining BR Hills during night. There is always the prospect of encountering wild animals in the dense forest. Keeping this in mind, Art of Living’s Light A Home project team distributed portable solar lights to 10 forest guards. The guards were extremely happy to receive the lights and were at a loss for words because it was happening for the first time in their life, said Art of Living teacher Priya Vijayagopal.

Following the response, lights were distributed for security reasons and to save electricity. These remote villages were not easily accessible and it was difficult to distribute portable lights. The reason is that there are no street lights and not many of the houses have electricity.

Now, the second phase of electrification is underway in the two villages of BR Hills. In the first phase, about 160 lights were distributed in Chamrajnagar. Project coordinator: Priya Vijayagopal, 08971944597

A smile to the forest: Niranjan, SSSDP (Sri Sri Rural Development program) trustee (middle) with forest guards

Dilip Kumar Koli 09335497006

Pitching in: YLTP course participants at NSS camp of Soundarya PU College clean the rubble and desilting the pond.

MRP course participants at NSS camp of Soundarya PU College clean the rubble and desilting the pond.
Use of desi cows in organic farming

Kollam, Kerala: Art of Living organised a seminar on cow protection and organic farming in Kollam on 9th of November. Yuvacharya Bishnoi addressed the gathering of around 150 participants who came from various parts of the district. He said that he knew they could not rule India without breaking its rich culture and tradition. No one was poor, and the villages were self-reliant and prosperous at that time. So the only way to overpower the residents of villages was to make them dependent on pesticides and fertilizers, which would ultimately make them dependent for everything else.

The Yuvacharya said about 100 years ago the first modern, non-desi cow was introduced in India, and desi cows were ignored under the name of milk revolution. He highlighted the benefits of the milk from desi cows and compared it with that of high-bred cows which could cause various diseases.

Art of Living teacher Shalmohan also shared his experiences of ‘Punarjani’ project, where he trained 20 youth in organic farming during 2010-2011 and taught them how desi cows were useful in Ayurveda and farming. The trained youth spread the awareness to other villages, which made the project a huge success.

Arum and Manthandan, Art of Living

Chikmagalur farmers rejoice as water level goes up due to Vedavadi project

Chikmagalur, Karnataka: The first phase of the Vedavadi River rejuvenation project is underway, and within a month bore wells have enough water to irrigate the surrounding farms again. The water level, which was about 10,000 feet below ground level, has gone up after the construction of recharge wells. Water is now available at just 250-300 feet below ground level.

Some of the recently dug bore wells hit the water table at 110 feet. The first phase of rejuvenation is complete, and 810 works have been completed, including the construction of injection wells and bore wells, as well as recharging of wells, ponds and lakes. Dried up water sources and wells were also cleaned up. The second phase of the project is scheduled to start soon, and there are about 1,620 more works to be completed. Residents of the 52 villages of Lakya Holli have joined hands with the organization to make this project a success, said Nagaraj, the project coordinator.

Small streams feeding the Vedavadi, a tributary of the Tungalhadra, flow from a height of 1471 meters above sea level, at the initial stage. Expanding its base, the Vedavadi crosses Chitradurga and joins the Tungalhadra in Andhra Pradesh. Lakya Holli spreads over an area of 377.52 sq. Km., and is good for storing water. Water recharge wells contain 40 mm of jelly and charcoal layers that help in filtration of water. The boulders help easy percolation of water into the ground. An injection well is fitted with concrete holes which help water to percolate easily. Art of Living volunteers and the local government have joined hands for the Vedavadi rejuvenation project, which comes under the MNREGA scheme. About 1,355 people are active participants, and the project is providing not only water to the inhabitants but also employment.

Project Coordinator: Nagaraj, 9611808866

If you are working on any project or YLTP activities, please contact us on 08067433615, 08067433603, 09620169697, E-mail: sevetimes@yltp.org

Salesman becomes film director after Art of Living

Meeenakshi Chauhan 9814548823

Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh: Yoga Venkatesh worked as a salesman in Hyderabad but nurtured a strong desire to become a film director. After working as a salesman for 10 years until 2008, he finally took the plunge into show business. But to fulfill his dream, he had to work hard. He said, “I didn’t have any of the four necessary things to excel in the film industry – qualification, connections, circles or money. These were the criteria for a person to succeed in the film field, but I had only the desire.”

Still, he took up a film career and soon became an assistant director, and then a director. “All this happened after 2008 when I joined Art of Living programme in Hyderabad and practised the Sudarshan Kiya taught there regularly. After three months, I quit the job and started my career in a new direction. I directed Telsuga movies with great clarity of mind, which I lacked earlier.”

With the inspiration of Sri Sri, Venkatesh released a DVD comprising six songs that inspired people to vote for a better future of India. Out of these two songs, were approved by the State government of Andhra Pradesh to create awareness among the masses to exercise their right to vote.

In 2014, he released another new CD titled, ‘Anna Datta Sukhibhava’ which highlighted the importance of chemical-free farming. “This is Sri Sri’s main concern and I too wanted to contribute to his vision of prosperous and happy farmer and a healthy society.” The video shows a modern village that is well equipped with a pharmacy and a wine shop, which we could hardly find in the early days. He also showed that the importance of Ayurveda is declining and that desi cows are disappear- ing from village courtyards. This gives an important message that desi cows and organic farming will help solve health issues.

Having grown up as a native of Dummavinavapalem in Guntur district of Telangana, Venkatesh has observed village life closely and understands the local problems very well. He has a special love for villages, farmers and the next generation of villagers who are unable to get quality education like their urban counterparts. He started a library in Maaspalla village of Nizamabad exclusive for students, which now has more than 1,000 books. Though he has studied only up to matriculation, he says, “Now I have the confidence to write a script or an article within minutes. Earlier, I could hardly think of writing or even reading a newspaper.”

As a successful salesman for 10 years, he wanted to put it down in writing. Based on his experiences, he wrote a book in Telugu, ‘Sales super star’, which was published and distributed by RS Brothers among the company’s employees. The book deals with the relationship of a salesman with a customer, which reflects his own personality, and chronicles his personal experiences.

Venkatesh Yoga: 09294131148

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