



SRI ARUNODAYAM
Home for Mentally Challenged Destitute

www.sriarunodayam.org

ISSUE 1 - JANUARY 2017

Udhayam

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM SRI ARUNODAYAM CHARITABLE TRUST

Iyyappan's Message

We are reviving Udayam!

Dear Friends,

I am honored to re-introduce Udayam our quarterly newsletter, which will provide a concise yet comprehensive picture of all that's happening at Sri Arunodayam, in addition to news from our immediate environment and news in the related fields of mental retardation (MR) and disability. I encourage you to participate by emailing us and sharing your ideas, comments and suggestions about the kind of information that you'd like to see featured in future editions. I take this opportunity to thank everyone who has contributed to this first edition.

As always, I am thankful for every kind action extended towards us, every good word spoken on our behalf, and every positive thought that has led to much innovation for our cause.

Happy reading!

Iyyappan Subramaniyan
Founder & Managing Trustee



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|-----------------------|---|-------------------|---|----------------------|----|
| • Roundup | 2 | • Advocacy Corner | 7 | • Jewel in our Crown | 10 |
| • Upcoming Events | 6 | • Partner Speak | 8 | • Employee Champions | 10 |
| • Recent Recognitions | 6 | • Trusty Souls | 9 | • New Therapies | 11 |
| • In the Limelight | 7 | • NGO Spotlight | 9 | • What's Hot? | 12 |

Roundup

Being the first issue in a long while, let's quickly bring you up-to-speed over the past couple of months.

EVENTS & PROGRAMS



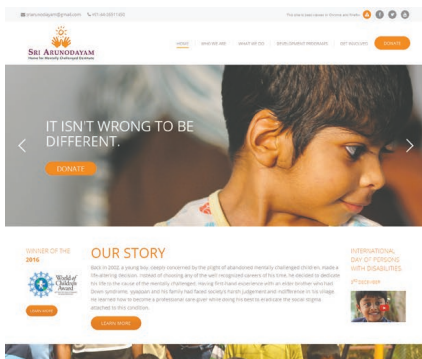
April 12: We welcomed 5 new children (or, technically speaking – young adults) into our home. Siva, Kandasamy, Basha, Moosan, and Kumar are mentally challenged orphans above the age of 18. They were sent from home to home and finally landed up with us. We are happy to say that they've fit in very well, are a great help to our home, and good friends with our children! ([Read the report, here.](#))



April 25: In an attempt to do our part during the heatwave, we launched our "Share Water, Share Life" campaign via Facebook offering simple solutions to keep safe and save lives. Readers were appreciative and got back to us saying that our workable ideas helped them and their families a lot.



May 8: Mukesh, one of our boys, was promoted to the 8th standard. He is studying at St Louis' School for the Blind, Adyar. Mukesh wants to become an IAS Officer and his disability is not dissuading him in the least!



May 10: We launched our [new website](#) and stepped into the digital world! The site has received much attention and favourable reviews till date, but we are always open to new suggestions and ideas. Special thanks to Althea, Hari and the Pixint Team for putting heart and soul into this project.



May 17: We launched new volunteer schemes through our website. We are happy that so many volunteers are offering to help us in more ways than we thought possible. Thank you very much dear volunteers!

[\(Read more\)](#)



May 24: Kamal from Yalini Dance Studio, Kilpauk took dance classes for our children. This is a class they never want to miss!



June 1: The Chennai Volunteers Team conducted drawing classes for our children. Creativity flowed in abundance and the children enjoyed expressing themselves through art.



July 8: Kittu, a sweet natured Labrador, joins our family! He is the current reigning star at our home. Kittu and the children have a natural empathy for each other, which is doing them all a world of good! Thank you Tim and Venkat for this lovely gift. [\(Read the report, here.\)](#)



July 28: We participated in the 8th Hindu Spiritual & Service Fair 2016 by putting up a stall selling [Prayatna's lovely products](#) to visitors. (Prayatna is our in-house vocational Training Center.)



June 9: The family of Marc Sauquet – Santiago, Mariona and Jordi Broca Casals visited our home with Ranvir Shah, spending half a day interacting with the children and staff. What pleased them most is that our children look bright and happy and are eager to engage with people.



July 17: We participated in Vegam 2016 at Chennai's Nehru Stadium. This is an event for special children organized by Chennai Social Service. Our children bagged 3 gold, 3 silver and 4 bronze medals and had a lot of fun, thanks to the Vegam 2016 team and the volunteers who assisted them.



August 5: Our joy doubles! Dhanalakshmi and Bhagyalakshmi (2 young cows) join our family. Together with Kittu (the Labrador dog) they provide great pet therapy for our children who love looking after them. Thank you Sharing Smiles, USA and Sukumar Packirisamy for your kind donation. [\(Read the report, here.\)](#)



August 15: We celebrated India's 69th Independence Day at the boys' home in Madanakuppam. The members of our Residential Welfare Association hoisted the national flag and distributed sweets and gifts to the boys. Mr. Siva Jaikumar (Chennai District Child Protection Officer) hoisted the flag and distributed sweets and gifts at our girl's home.



August 30: Special thanks to Sharing Smiles USA, and Wafa and Abid Ali Junaid who sponsored 45 cerebral palsy chairs for our home in response to a web campaign. Each chair is made to order with padded extensions for the head, a soft belt, a padded seat, and a small attached table top that allows the child to play with toys, scribble and draw, or learn to feed. ([Read the report, here.](#))



September 5: We celebrated Vinayagar Chaturthi at our home. The children were given sumptuous meals and special sweets to mark the occasion.



September 10: Our senior special educators - Pandi Ganesan and Valli - were honoured with the Best Teacher Award by the Lioness Council - Lions Club International District 324 A1. Special thanks to Padma Anand, Lion Kalamathy Suthanandam, Radha Krishna, and Sujatha Sundar for gracing this occasion and honouring our staff. This is a huge recognition in their career!



September 11: Our children are continuously rehabilitated and empowered through their participation in sporting events and activities. At the sports event organised by Amateur Sports Academy, Chennai they bagged 10 gold and 5 silver medals! Quite a feat for these little ones.



September 22: Our little champions do us proud in yet another celebrated sporting event organized by the Tamil Nadu Special Children's Sports Academy in Chennai. 20 schools and organizations participated and our children enjoyed themselves - showing off their talents and feeling very important. ([Read the report, here.](#))



September 29: Our boys taught the employees of Tata Communications, Ambattur how to make candles, diyas and paper bags. We also sold Prayatna's products to them. It was a good learning experience and the teams had a lot of fun together.



October 2-8: We celebrated Daan Utsav week by sharing hot meals with the homeless in and around Kolathur and Red Hills. The meals were cooked by our young adults and caregivers. Both givers and receivers shared happy and emotional moments together! ([Read the report, here](#))



October 3: We conducted an awareness rally about the intellectually challenged. Our children and staff assembled at the Pudur Bus Stand to help educate the general public on mental retardation. It attracted the attention we hoped for as people came forward to ask questions and initiate conversations.



October 4: For almost a week we conducted information campaigns through stalls at Olympia Tech Park and IOC Bunks carrying our literature, and products for sale made by our young adults at Prayatna. We just wanted people to know that the mentally challenged are perfectly capable of becoming productive members of society with a little care and help!



October 5: Our youngsters visited the Cancer Institute and taught 40 mothers of children with cancer, how to make lovely paper bags. It was a great sharing and learning experience for the mothers and our boys as well. Special thanks to Chennai Volunteers for providing the opportunity.



October 6: Right until the end of the month we collected over 3000 kilos of rice and distributed it to special schools, orphanages and old age homes in rural areas. We chose these homes because they have critical needs which remain unmet just because they lack visibility! (Special thanks to all our donors and to the Lions Club and Lioness Councils for making this program a huge success.)



October 7: We distributed fruit to gypsy and Irular children who come from very impoverished backgrounds. Without good nutrition it is difficult for these children to actually get through school. Although what we did appears to be a drop in the ocean, on the 7th, every child had a stomach full of healthy fruit!



October 23: We participated in the CEO Run at the Chennai Marathon event conducted by United Way Chennai. Our children were there to cheer the CEOs on and showcase their talents. It was a good time of learning and interacting with the CEOs of top corporations and other NGOs



Oct 25: As always, Diwali is much awaited by the children who love the lights, crackers and festivities that accompany this festival. They had delicious meals and a lot of fun all through the day. The teachers educate them on the origins and significance of each festival we celebrate at the home. Our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Subbarao who so kindly sponsors 2 sets of clothes for every child and staff member each Diwali.



October 27: Iyyappan Subramaniyan received the World of Children® Award at the 2016 Awards Ceremony in New York City, USA. He shared his work in a brief address to the evening's guests of around 500 individuals from top firms across industries. World of Children® Award receives thousands of nominations from almost 100 countries annually and uses a uniquely rigorous vetting process to select honorees, including an on-site investigation and independent audit of each finalist. [\(Read more\)](#)



November 11: Our children participated in the Differently Abled District Level Sports Meet 2016 and stole the show, as always. Madhavan was honored by the District Collector for bagging many medals at the event.



November 14: We had an exciting program lined up for Children's Day. Our staff entertained them with a variety program and they enjoyed sumptuous meals and desserts. Later in the day they enjoyed tea with the aged at Premapuri, an ashram at Thirumullaivoyal. This was a poignant but happy time for both age groups as they connected with each other. [\(Read the report here.\)](#)



November 15: The children enjoyed an evening at the beach where they frolicked to their hearts content! This culminated our Children's Day program for the year, and they had a fun time indeed!



November 20: Prayatna launched its official [FB](#) and [webpage](#). Please support and provide your feedback. (Prayatna is the Skill Development Center for our young MR adults at Sri Arunodayam). Information on the products are constantly being updated.



November 20: We started classical Bharatanatyam dance classes for our girls. Special thanks to Reshma Gunasekar - an experienced Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi dancer, and a committed volunteer and friend who helped us greatly during the Chennai floods. The girls are really enjoying themselves as they learn a new skill!



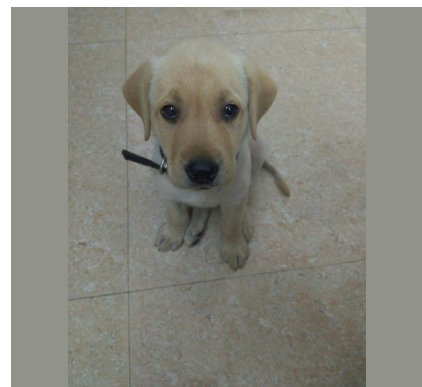
November 26: Sahi Cafe celebrated their first anniversary by inviting our children for a fun time at their Café. The children were given good refreshments and gifts. Special thanks to Thirupurasundari who organized this event and gave our children a fun time!



November 27: Alisha Nursery celebrated their first anniversary by inviting our boys over for a fun event. The boys were encouraged to paint and exhibit their talent in fine arts. They were also given good refreshments. Special thanks to Sabina and Santhalakshmi for extending this wonderful opportunity to us.



November 27: A team of 40 staff from Deloitte visited our home to spend a day with the children. They organised various entertainment and skill training programmes which the children enjoyed very much. We were happy to see a corporate engage meaningfully with our cause. Thank you very much, Deloitte.



November 28: Namita joins our family. She is a little Labrador pup gifted to our little girls. The family is complete now with Kittu for the boys and Namita for the girls. She is a bundle of joy and the girls can learn a lot by interacting with her. Could things get more exciting?



December 1: We launched our [Special Mom Award - 15:15:15 Campaign](#). In 2017 we complete 15 years of service to the cause of abandoned mentally challenged children. That's why we launched the Special Mom campaign today, to discover and honor 15 deserving mothers in 2017, our 15th year of service! The campaign was launched through our website at a special function opened by a prominent social activist and well-wisher - Mrs. Badrunnisa Mahadevan. [\(Read more\)](#)



December 3: Being the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, we conducted awareness campaigns to show our solidarity. [Our powerful 1-minute film](#) on Facebook and YouTube received over 90,000 views in 5 days! In the afternoon, we held an Awareness Rally on Marina Beach. 50 of our special children carried placards with key messages on disability and interacted with the public. Mrs. Sudha Ramalingam, a prominent Social Activist & Senior Advocate was our Chief Guest, and Actor Shanthanu Bhagyaraj was our Guest of Honor at this event. [\(Read the report, here.\)](#)

Upcoming Events

We are organizing a very special event in 2017. Block the dates and try and be with us. We guarantee you won't regret it!

SPECIAL MOM AWARD 2017



Background

Parents of Mentally Retarded (MR) children (whether biological or adopted) are never really prepared for what lies ahead in the journey with their children. MR children have absolutely no ability to self-regulate and appear difficult to live with. They need regular appointments with their therapists, doctors, special educators and caregivers' – much more than normal children.

Because MR children are unable to express themselves except in rather primitive ways, it is difficult even for their own parents to truly understand them. The cumulative negative effects of stress on the parents make them inevitably end up resenting their child at some point. Parents need positive reinforcement but when their children don't respond, they wonder whether their efforts are making a difference at all.

Findings

When Sri Arunodayam spoke to mothers of MR children we found most of them to be exhausted, frustrated or depressed. When these working mothers come home to their MR children - there's even more work to do! This leaves them drained and tired and they don't know where or how to get their own emotional needs met.

Another huge complicating factor is that the special needs of such children run on long past their childhood. Many of these children have trouble in their adult life, and this continues to impact the parents. Undoubtedly, these are the negative effects but there are positives too. Yet, few are equipped to see this because of the continuous stress that they experience.

Creating a paradigm shift in the prevailing mind-set

In our work with these children, we are constantly made aware of the role of parents – especially mothers, in the healthy upbringing and development of their children. Facing these challenges ourselves, we often wondered what life must be like for mothers of MR children who chose not to take the easy way out by abandoning them. To us, such mothers are true unsung heroes! But they are often misunderstood, discriminated against, and judged.

Sri Arunodayam believes that it is time to encourage and [honor these mothers](#) by providing an open, non-prejudiced platform where they can share their feelings, experiences and difficulties. Only by embracing all aspects of caregiving – the positive and the negative – can there be true holistic growth for them and their children.

Our 'Special Mom' #15:15:15 Campaign

2017 is going to be a milestone year for Sri Arunodayam. We will complete 15 years of diligent service to the cause of abandoned mentally challenged children. What better time than this to commence a worthy program of this nature! That's why we launched our [Special Mom campaign](#) in December to discover and honor 15 deserving mothers in our 15th year of service!

Are you the mother of a special child? Do you know a deserving mother? Is there someone you'd like to nominate?

- Download the Nomination Form in Tamil, [here](#).
- Download the Nomination Form in English, [here](#).
- Get the whole scoop [here](#).

Recent Recognitions



Iyyappan wins World of Children® Award 2016

For his heroic work with vulnerable children

Iyyappan and four other honorees received their awards at a special function in New York City, USA, on the 27th October 2016. The honorees – considered to be real-life heroes who tirelessly work to improve the lives of vulnerable children – were chosen from a pool of several thousand nominations for this year's Awards. The nominations were reviewed by an International Committee of issue experts and the candidates were investigated by an Independent International Firm to ensure that their programs are of the highest caliber.

Food & Safety certification: Sri Arunodayam's kitchen is now recognized and licensed under the Food Safety & Standards Act, 2006 (by the Government of Tamil Nadu Food Safety & Drug Administration Department, Food Safety Wing).

Juvenile Justice Act renewal: Sri Arunodayam's recognition under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Act 2006, as a Children's Home for the Mentally Challenged Destitute, has been renewed.

Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) renewal: This important certification for Sri Arunodayam has been renewed by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, for the next 5 years, with effect from November 1, 2016.

In the Limelight

PRAYATNA: A GOOD EFFORT



Prayatna's [Facebook page](#)

Read the report on our boys at the organic vegetable garden and shop, [here](#).

Our [Volunteer page](#) gives options on how you can become part of noble causes such as this one.

There is growing recognition for the right of an individual with disabilities to live within the community and be integrated back into mainstream society. This recognition is based on innumerable studies that prove that persons with disabilities can actually lead dignified and successful lives and become independent in their personal, social and occupational spheres - provided that proper training is imparted to them early on.

If we have learnt anything at all in these past 14 years of caring for the mentally challenged, it is that nothing is impossible for them when they are given the right opportunities and support. They have every potential to become productive citizens of society, if only given a chance!

Prayatna's Story

Sri Arunodayam opened [Prayatna](#) (its vocational training unit) in 2012, in an attempt to train all its young mentally challenged adults (above the age of 18) and

provide them with the skills to sustain a trade. This training became a form of occupational therapy, helping them develop the necessary interactive social skills for their emotional wellbeing. Prayatna (which means 'a good effort') is proving to be a great opportunity for our young adults to engage, learn, work, interact, and become productive citizens of society

Skills taught

[Prayatna](#) currently trains them in activities like book binding, cattle rearing, paper bag, envelope, candle, diya and jewellery making. They also make artificial garlands out of flowers and beads which can be used at special functions. All the products are sold to visitors and to the immediate neighbourhood. Activities such as block printing, vermiculture, and opening a nursery garden are commencing soon. We are constantly studying vocational options that would best suit our children's abilities

Advocacy Corner

TAMIL NADU'S 'CRADLE BABY' SCHEME

In 1992, the Government of Tamil Nadu launched a wonderful scheme called the 'Cradle Baby' Scheme to help battle female infanticide in the State. Under this scheme, young mothers in towns and villages across Tamil Nadu could quietly and anonymously hand over their new-borns to the State instead of abandoning their children. This worthy scheme was the brainchild of our recently demised Chief Minister, Ms. J Jayalithaa who first launched it in Salem district in 1992, and later extended it to Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Dharmapuri, Erode and Namakkal districts in 2001 when she became Chief Minister of the State for the second time.

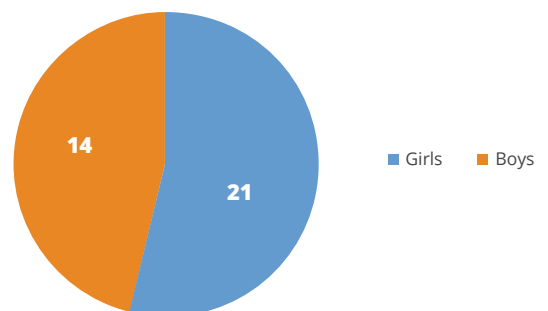
Each Cradle Baby centre is supposedly equipped with a superintendent, an assistant nurse, an assistant, and other workers. Cradles were also placed at hospitals, primary health centers and children's homes to receive girl children. As many as 188 centres in these districts were equipped with incubators, life-saving drugs, refrigerators, gas connections, bed sheets and clothes for the children. The government also successfully organised camps, seminars and conferences to create awareness of female infanticide.

The scheme has received wide acclaim within India and from across the world. A few thousands have been saved from the clutches of death and given in adoption; many growing up in good families, being educated, and leading a good quality of life.

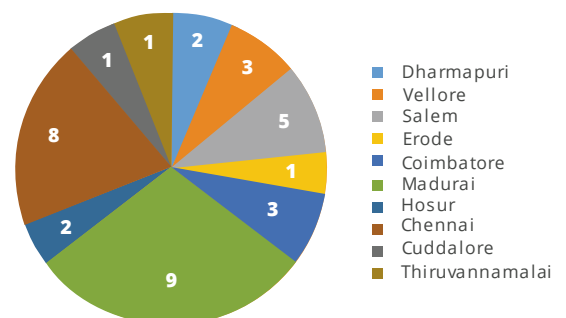
We deeply appreciate this scheme especially as 35 (a little more than 1/3rd) of the children currently at our home came to us as a result of it.

Would their stories be around to tell if the scheme hadn't existed? A truly sobering thought...

Our Cradle Babies



From Cradle Baby Centers



Partner Speak

RANGOONWALA FOUNDATION (INDIA) TRUST



"I will never forget my first visit to Sri Arunodayam. A late evening in the summer of 2009, meeting the cheerful and well cared for special children, surrounded by very few material amenities, but a lot of love, affection and individual care from each team member... be it a caregiver, or the Founder-Trustee Iyyappan himself! For RF(I)T, this partnership has been a high impact one, where Sri Arunodayam has not only met its commitments, but demonstrated the futuristic thinking and able implementation of a dynamic organization that we are privileged to be associated with.

- Nisreen Ebrahim,
CEO, Rangoonwala Foundation (India) Trust, Mumbai

UNITED WAY OF CHENNAI (UWC)



"I'm really touched by Sri Arunodayam's work with vulnerable children. The dignity you accord to life is so evident in everything you do. The home is clean and the children exhibit a healthy, happy zest for life. I see a genuineness and transparency that is rare to find these days. Iyyappan's positive, 'can do' attitude in any situation really impresses me.

I wish Sri Arunodayam all the very best."

- Shyamala Ashok
Executive Director, United Way of Chennai (UWC)

United Way of Chennai (UWC) is a secular, non-partisan, non-political, non-profit, non-government, registered society dedicated to improving lives in Tamil Nadu. It addresses the long term needs of communities by promoting and encouraging voluntary charitable service and volunteerism. UWC is a part of United Way Worldwide (UWW) which features in the list of top 15 charities in the world. UWC's primary areas of focus are education, healthcare, income and livelihood sectors. www.unitedwaychennai.org

We recently caught up with Shyamala Ashok – UWC's Executive Director for a quick chat. Here are some of her thoughts on the issues discussed.

Q: In an Indian scenario dependence is heavy on volunteering, which can at times affect service continuity. How can NGOs attract and retain volunteers to their cause?

A: It is essential to have proper volunteer policies and processes in place, to begin with. Developing a strategic plan that keeps volunteers interested and engaged at all times is very crucial to attracting and retaining them. Motivation plays a large part; but also sending them specific requests that they can

respond to, and frequent one-on-ones to arrive at mutual areas of interest, can all go a long way in keeping them interested in your cause. Long term volunteering is best sought from corporates but the interest must commence right at the top with the head of the organization for this to become a sustained channel. In the end, volunteering must relate to real life situations that enthruse a person to make it a habit. Only then it becomes sustainable.

Q: How must fundraising be organized to be more effective?

A: Individual donors are the largest and most effective fundraising source. Keeping in touch with your individual donor base is non-negotiable. And these days there are so many ways to reach out to them by phone, email, or social media which is helping connect various groups together. For fundraising to be really effective, all groups (donors, volunteers, corporate sponsors, etc.) must be linked so that they can be leveraged effectively in any situation. Always promote a single cause at an event to avoid confusion, and remember, the more people you involve the better the opportunities and the outcomes.

Q: How can NGOs really work together to make better impact in society?

A: NGOs work on limited budgets and shared resources is always a good way to lower costs. Internal networking must improve and staff strengths must be leveraged across the organization so that things move quickly. NGOs themselves must feel the need to work together to address larger issues based on the public's need. In this way, they can actually serve society in more definitive ways.

Q: How can NGOs and the Government work together more cohesively?

A: Our country's population is large and its needs are immense. We need to understand that Government positions keep shifting frequently, making it imperative for us to spend time in developing relationships with Government staff. Inviting them to attend our activities, events, and programs is a good way to get them involved and helps them easily recall us. They may not respond to every invitation but it is in our interest to invite them and stay connected.



Trusty Souls

A LANDLORD WITH HEART!

This is the account of Mr. Seshagiri Rao, the Landlord of Sri Arunodayam's Girl's Home. Mr. Rao was one of the founder trustees of Sri Arunodayam. It was his wife Saileela who chose the name Sri Arunodayam for our home.

I was fortunate to meet Iyyappan Subramaniyan over 14 years ago on account of my grandson. My grandson was one year old at that time, and being spastic, required special attention and physiotherapy. I used to take him to MITRA (the only rehabilitation center for the differently-abled at that time) for daily therapy.

One day, as fate would have it, Iyyappan took the session and I immediately sensed that something was different about it. The way he handled the session, the love he showed the children and the attention to every one of their requirements impressed me. I was very enamoured. Being an aged man, it was getting increasingly difficult for me to do the daily trip to MITRA and so I plucked up courage to ask Iyyappan if he would be kind enough to continue the therapy at my home. He immediately accepted, which is typical of his 'can do' nature.

As we got better acquainted, I heard about his brother's story and that

Iyyappan nursed a dream to open a home for the mentally challenged someday. As a College Professor at that time, I was quite astounded by the clarity and genuineness of this young lad and felt that something good was going to come of this relationship. Iyyappan himself was new to Chennai and I wanted to help him with his dream, so, we registered my home which became Sri Arunodayam's first home.

That's how it all started. My wife was very involved with the children who came to the home and the little ones used to call us "Dad" and "Mum". I still think about those days which were some of the happiest of our lives! Unfortunately, due to my wife's medical condition we were forced to get back to Andhra where we now reside. But we still miss those times and would give anything to get back there. Whenever I'm in Chennai I make it a point to visit Iyyappan and the little girls who now reside in my home.

Iyyappan has met and even exceeded my expectations of him. I am so fortunate to

be associated with Sri Arunodayam. Every paisa is accounted for and he has lifted the home to great heights – the recent World of Children® Award attests this.

I'd like to close with a small incident which concerns getting the 80G Tax Exemption status. We had been trying very unsuccessfully to get this for a long time. Frustrated with the delays, Mr. Ranganathan Chetty (a Chartered Accountant and Sri Arunodayam's Trustee) one day requested the IT Department to visit the home and check things out for themselves and whether they decided to give or not give the certification was beside the point. They did come over, and the next thing we knew was that we got the certification and a large donation as well! A testament to the calibre of this home!

I wish Iyyappan and Sri Arunodayam continued success.

NGO Spotlight

NO ONE EVER OUTGROWS THE NEED FOR LOVE!



Premapuri is a home for the abandoned aged at Thirumullaivoyal, Chennai. We were fortunate to have visited them on Children's Day when we took the children over to begin connecting these generations as part of our 'healing the generations' program. Premapuri has 40 inmates and they keep themselves busy doing a lot of worthwhile activities around the home.

Premapuri has no website nor do they make a fanfare of their activities. You never really hear about them in the news but the home is providing a truly commendable service to the abandoned aged. It's good to remember that the true character of a society is revealed in how it treats its children and its aged. Let's take the time to visit.

Jewels in our Crown

ABI - AN UNCUT DIAMOND!

Although Abi Siddharth is 19 years old, he doesn't look his age. His small stature and delightfully impish smile give him an irresistibly boyish look. For someone suffering as much as he does, he has one of the sweetest dispositions among the boys at our home.

Abandoned in December 2005 near a subway at Chennai's Central Railway Station, Abi was spotted by the Police who contacted Don Bosco ChildLine who rescued him and handed him over to the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), Chennai. Since he was mentally challenged the CWC eventually sent him to us.

Abi is an MR (mentally retarded) child. He also suffers with Cerebral Palsy and spastic quadriplegia. He developed renal complications and osteogenesis, which makes him prone to fractures as his bones have become brittle. He often has fits and is totally dependent on the caregivers for all his personal needs.

Not choosing to focus on the negatives, his teacher looked for ways to tap his hidden potential. Realizing that he is quite capable of using his feet to express himself, she taught him to draw, color, and even write his name with his feet! Abi loves listening to music and enjoys eating biriyani. But he is happiest when someone gives him a pair of sun glasses!



Inspite of his disability, Abi has a special way of making you feel loved every day!

Employee Champions

No one embodies this fact better than Maheswari, and you'll agree once you've heard her incredible story.

MY ABILITY IS STRONGER THAN MY DISABILITY!



Maheswari joined us 9 years ago. She is physically challenged and uses both hands and feet to get around. Back in Kumbakonam - where she hails from - Maheswari read an article about Sri Arunodayam in a newspaper and felt in her heart that she wanted to serve the children here. She broached the topic with her parents who, understandably, shot the idea down, given her disability and the fact that she would have to relocate to a new city and survive

there on her own. To a lesser person the matter might have ended there; but not for a person like Maheswari. She persisted and persisted but permission was always denied.

One day, Maheswari decided that she was coming to Sri Arunodayam with or without the permission. A very gutsy move and one that speaks volumes about her character. She took the bus, got down at Koyambedu bus stand, and asked a passer-by to help her reach Sri Arunodayam. The kind lad assisted her and she landed up at our doorstep. You could imagine our surprise!

Maheswari insisted on working right away. We were worried that it would be difficult for her, but her disability never disturbed her because she did not let it. Initially, she was extremely shy and hesitant and we wondered how she would fit in, but time brought about a delightful transformation. Maheswari has a wonderful way of relating to people. She's warm and friendly and people tend to open up to her easily. She's also trustworthy, very organized, and methodical. Donors and guests instantly took to her and she became the pivot at our office. She's a naturally brilliant PR person and donor relationship manager. Highly reliable, she also took up cash management. Maheswari is greatly respected and gets a top salary for her position. She's a B.COM graduate who's truly made herself indispensable! Persistent, committed, respectful and humble, Maheswari is an inspiring role model for all those who suffer with disabilities. We are the ones truly indebted to her for her selfless service, day-after-day-after-day!

True Engagement

Sheila E Jane is a volunteer who reads stories to our little girls. She connects with each one on such a personal level that she has made a wonderful impact on them. They love having her around and she loves what she is doing. Here's her story in her own words.

I'M BEING TRANSFORMED!

"Just come along Madam... have a look at our children... you'll simply fall in love with them..." my neighbour urged me every time he saw me. He wanted me to pay a visit to Sri Arunodayam where he worked. I hesitated at first because I wasn't really sure why I should visit. My instincts told me that I shouldn't treat people like artefacts in an exhibition, but I wondered what I could really do about the misery of human beings. The anxiety of feeling helpless when watching helpless people crept into me. I tried to make my peace with these disturbing emotions but kept hearing my neighbour's insistent call. So I decided concede and gave it a shot!

I landed at Sri Arunodayam one Sunday afternoon and discovered I had stepped into heaven! My fears were dispelled as the children welcomed me with large smiles. They accepted me as their own, leaving me with no choice but to simply become a part of them. Somehow, I felt I wasn't a stranger and in some deep realm within myself, I felt I knew each one of them. They vied for my attention drawing me to their little trinkets and possessions. My motherly instincts broke through causing me to cry especially when I met Sivagami, Pooja and Aishwarya - who have been nasal-fed from birth. Knowing that they've never tasted solid food really broke my heart. Tears welled as I thought of years lived and wasted without visiting angels like these. I sang a soothing Christmas carol - "Silent night" - to them. As I sang I simply choked and sobbed. The emotion of re-discovering my inner being, overtook me.

At this point I decided to come here as often as possible and allow myself to drift away into the magical worlds of say, Sonia, Kalpaka, Sunithi, Narmada, Nila, Priyankasree, Tamaya and the others. For me, storytelling is an astounding medium to dive into children's hearts and so I chose it. Books I used to read to my son and daughter when they were toddlers came in handy. Sri Arunodayam is well organized with colourful and appropriate furniture. Their staff and teachers are professional and dedicated. With the right equipment and an atmosphere for free learning, reading to children became a joy!

As I read sentence by sentence, I was truly surprised by their capacity to comprehend even though the world called them mentally challenged. They are eager to read and see the connection between printed words and real life. Anyone would find it adorable to see little Sai pointing out the words as they are being read.



Sunithi relates to the characters in the story by grabbing the book and kissing the picture. The personality they love the most is the 'doctor'. Perhaps they are familiar with the doctor as she is a role model at the home. This is evident when I read 'Barney and friends' to them, where one of the friends plays 'pretend doctor' with a doll for a patient.

The children are familiar with the words, 'Happy Birthday'. They are eager to learn the spelling. As I read "Birthday Surprise" of the Tatty Ted series, their interest in the two words are aroused. They associate with it very well, since people often drop by to celebrate their birthdays with the children.

I'm always amazed that a large group of children prefer to stay back and continue reading with me instead of watching 'Super Singers' or film songs on television. It is their interest in storytelling that prods me on. Of course, it's not only reading that excites them but singing action songs as well. As I enter the gate, they exuberantly greet me with songs like, "Row, row, row your boat", and Sonia will hold my legs for support and help herself stand upright. Most times, she is prostrate on the floor, drooling and oblivious to her surroundings but she makes a tremendous effort to stand up only to sing and clap hands for, "When you're happy and you know it, clap your hands." While we sing happily she uses me as her prosthetic. The children sing, do actions and roll into peals of laughter. And when I leave them to return to other things, I miss them terribly; but I constantly hear them in my heart.

New Therapies

KITTU AND NAMITA



Most happy families have pets. There's something about a pet that is so soothing to the mind and heart. Kittu and Namita are sweet natured white Labrador dogs who were gifted to our home. Of course, Kittu is in his twilight years and Namita is but a baby, yet they are the current reigning stars at the boys and girls homes, respectively. Animals and children appear to have a natural empathy for each other, and this is doing both a world of good! Kittu and Namita are an integral part of the children's lives, and play time is eagerly looked forward to.

The children take them for walks and are familiar with their routines. The dogs are regularly bathed and groomed by officially appointed caregivers. Pet therapy has known therapeutic effects, but no science can measure the joy we feel when we experience the unconditional love of a dog. Truly, the dog is man's best friend!

Season's Greetings!

Sri Arunodayam takes this opportunity to greet and share love with all its benefactors, well-wishers and friends celebrating festivals in the coming months. Until we meet again, here's wishing you all a Happy New Year, Makar Sankranti, Pongal, Republic Day, Holi, and more! May you enjoy much happiness and peace

What's Hot ?

OUR LATEST RELEASES

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| Our website www.sriarunodayam.org | Our FB page https://www.facebook.com/Sri-Arunodayam-Charitable-Trust-793664707409451/ | Our YouTube Channel https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCioq0rcGYqF6Y02UiwTUX8g/videos | Our 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities' film https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6ltCXJHdomk | Our home's story in film https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P00GmLBJ3Sk&feature=youtu.be |
| Prayatna's products https://sriarunodayam.org/prayatna/ | Prayatna's new FB page https://www.facebook.com/Prayatna-207829576323819/ | Special Mom Award 2017 https://sriarunodayam.org/special-mom-award/ | Sponsorship options https://sriarunodayam.org/sponsor-3/ | Volunteer options https://sriarunodayam.org/volunteer/ |
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SRI ARUNODAYAM
Home for Mentally Challenged Destitute

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