

Ever Flowing Stream

NEWS LETTER FROM PRAVAHAM

June 2020

Dear friends,

Warm greetings from Pravaham.

We hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones well and safe.

You are in our thoughts and prayers during this pandemic.

Pravaham was closed and the girls were sent home on the 17th of March in response to the precautionary measures taken by the Government in containing the pandemic.

The crisis brought by COVID 19 is unprecedented, affecting the poor and the marginalized the most. Pravaham office is kept open to do relief work. We are making all efforts to cope with the new normal and reach out to the needy.

We are in touch with our students. They are trying their best to cope in the midst of fear, anxiety and uncertainty about their future.

In midst of this gloom and despair we have the confidence that God will walk through this with us and this too will pass...

We are immensely thankful to our partners and friends of Pravaham who joined hands with us in helping those who were adversely affected by the pandemic.

I am sharing with you some important events and happenings from January to June 2020 and stories of hope, determination, and transformation of our students.

I hope you will enjoy reading what we have put together.

Lucy Shyamsundar

Tribute to Dr. J. Prakasa Rao



Dr. J. Prakasa Rao, former Head, Dept. of Physiology, CMC, Vellore, a very dear friend, benefactor, and supporter of Pravaham, was called to glory on the 6th, May 2020. His sudden demise indeed is a great loss to the Pravaham community.

Dr. Prakasa Rao and Mrs. Swarna Rao, the trustee of Pravaham worked closely with Bishop. Ananda Rao Samuel and supported him in starting the Pravaham Trust.

He was a gentleman in the true sense of the word. Humility, generosity, simplicity, compassion, and care for the disadvantaged were hallmarks of Dr. Prakasa Rao. He went through life always thinking of others and reaching out to the needy.

Whenever he visits Pravaham he would love to interact with the students and take a class on Human physiology. He would come down to their level and make the class very interesting. He would treat everyone with great respect and dignity, from the students to workers, to teachers.

Through his generous support to Pravaham, many lives of school dropout girls were transformed and rebuilt. The sweet fragrance of Dr. Prakasa Rao's life lingers on and he continues to live in our hearts.

We truly love him and he will be missed beyond words.



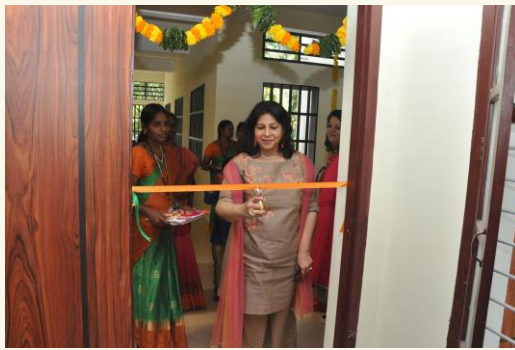
Special events

New hostel for Pravaham students - 'Sunshine Home':

On the 25th of January 2020, the new Hostel was inaugurated by Mr. Sonu Vaswani and Ms. Manju Vaswani, in the presence of our chairman Fr. Aloysius Irudayam, Co-founders – Mr. Paul Divakar and Ms. Annie Namala, Trustees of Pravaham, Ms. Sonia Gurnamal and many friends and well-wishers of Pravaham.

We are deeply grateful to Mr. Sonu Vaswani, Philanthropist, founder of Koshambh Charitable Trust, a humble and successful entrepreneur, for his generous and kind heart in funding the project. We are also thankful to Mr. Prem Kumar of Arch Garments HK for his kind contribution towards this project.

Pravaham community is deeply indebted to Ms. Sonia Gurnamal and Mr. Raju Lalwani who initiated and strived hard to raise funds through their friends for this project. It was Sonia's dream to give a spacious and comfortable accommodation conducive for learning and growth to the students who come from very poor families. Thanks to Mr. Johnson Augustine, the building Engineer, who constructed the hostel esthetically and functionally. It has 3 dormitories, a study hall, dining hall, rooms for wardens and office room, and can comfortably accommodate 60 students.



Republic day was celebrated on the 26th of January. Ms. Sonia Gurnamal and Ms. Monica Chadwani were Guests of Honour. Flag hoisting was done by Ms. Sonia Gurnamal. Students put up a colorful cultural program which was enjoyed by all. Mr. Samuel Kundan, Software Engineer, grand nephew of the founder, spoke on the significance of being a Republic, and the rights and the responsibilities of a citizen of a Republic nation.



‘Women's Day celebration:

'Women's Day was celebrated on the 15th of March. Women from Venkatapuram village, the students of Pravaham Community College, and their Mothers participated in the program. The program included talks on issues relating to women's health and empowerment, health check-ups, film shows, games, and entertainment. Dr. Carol Devamani, RUSHA, CMC, was the chief guest. She gave a valuable talk on the importance of good health practices pertaining to food, hygiene and environment. She gave awareness on the symptoms and signs of common health problems that affect women and reduce the risk of being prone to the disease.

Chitra.E who attended the program from Venkatapuram said, “I never enjoyed my childhood as I was married at the age of thirteen and became a mother by the age of fourteen. With an alcoholic husband, my married life is full of misery. Today I was able to forget all my troubles and enjoy the day. Now I am aware of my rights and I've got the confidence that I can give a good future for my children. I even had an opportunity to play games and win a prize too. I am very grateful to Pravaham for inviting me to this program.”

Mrs. Jayalakshmi, from Sattuvanthagal village said “ I missed one day's wages by attending this program but it is worth participating in it, as I learned so many things useful for my life and I had lot of fun too.



Community out reach Programs

Health awareness programs:

• We organized an awareness program on COVID-19, its symptoms and safety measures on the 7th of March. This took place in three villages of our students - Kanyambadi, Santhavasal, and Venkatapalayam near Polur at a time when corona virus started spreading in Tamilnadu.

Awareness on Cancer and Tuberculosis was also given on the same day. 169 people were benefitted by this program. Free Health check-ups were conducted for all the participants



Kanyambadi



Santhavasal



Chetteri village

• On the 11th of march health awareness Program was conducted at Chetteri village, in Palamathi. Health talk was given on Tuberculosis, and Coronavirus, its causes, signs, prevention, and treatment. Free health check-up was conducted for all the 45 participants.

Health Camps:

Monthly health camps were conducted every month in Pravaham till March 2020.

Due to the lock down we could not conduct the Medical camps from April 2020. Our Nursing Tutors visited the homes of the elderly patients, who regularly visit the health camp, from the surrounding villages. They checked BP and blood sugar levels and also distributed medicines for 3 months in consultation with the doctors.



Venkatapuram



Thanankulam

Reaching out to the suffering community during COVID 19 :

During these unprecedented times of COVID 19, we were able to reach out to the suffering communities in many villages in Arcot Taluk.

Through faith in God and love for our neighbour, we ventured into relief work with limited resources in our hand. We were able to distribute dry ration package consisting of 5 kgs Rice, 1 kg Dhal, 1L Oil and 2 soaps to 100 families belonging to Erular, gypsy and other tribal communities and migrant laborers from Odisha, working in rice mills and brick kilns.

More families belonging to the Dalit community, tribal groups, and sanitary workers approached us for help. Thanks to the timely support we received from our donors, we were able to distribute a bigger package of provisions consisting of 25 kgs of rice (1 bag), 1kg dhal, 1kg urad dhal, 1/2 kg dry beans, 1L oil, 250gms chili powder, turmeric, tamarind, 2kgs onions, 5 bath soaps, 5 washing soaps, a mask and a pack of sanitary napkins to 263 families. They were delighted to receive the relief packages containing so many items. Sub-Inspector of Police, Revenue inspector, and VAOs accompanied us during the distribution of relief and we received good support from them. They appreciated Pravaham's efforts and said that thus far no other charitable organization in the district had given a package of this measure and quality.

Nandini and Sankar, who are trans genders, earn their livelihood by doing odd jobs or beg, as people do not feel comfortable to hire them for work. With the COVID 19, the opportunity to work was gone. They said that the rations they received would see them through two months if they carefully use them.



Vellayatham works as a sanitary worker to clean the open drains and streets. His salary is Rs.2500 (\$35) a month which he receives from the village administration. His wife works as a laborer in the fields and with that extra amount they run the house. During the lockdown as there was no work for the wife, they were struggling to feed the family. The rations package given was a great relief to them.



Mallika and her husband along with another 18 families from Erular, a tribal community, work as laborers in brick kilns. They earn Rs.200 by making 500 bricks per day. And this work is also seasonal. They were all thankful to receive the relief packages.



Our heartfelt thanks to Ms. Claudia Brinkman Weiser, Chairperson, Evangelische Kirche, Kassel, and Mr. Bernd Kappes, General Secretary, CEF for their generous contribution towards the relief.



Reaching out to the families of our students:

We are in touch with all our students. We are also anxious about their well-being. All the girls who come to study at Pravaham come from a vulnerable population, who struggle for day to day living. They are also more prone to infection with no proper food and lack of immunity, and find it difficult to maintain self-distancing in very small living spaces. It makes our hearts heavy when we hear that in some families the mothers and the girls are bearing the brunt of the COVID situation. On one hand with no earnings for the past 3 months, and on the other increased domestic abuse by their alcoholic fathers who are frustrated being confined to the home with no alcohol.

Thanks to the support we received from our donors we were able to reach out to all the families of our students. On the 7th and 8th of June, Mr.C.Ravi, our administrator along with two staff Solomon and Ravi, visited 21 villages and distributed the ration packages. The students were so happy to see the staff and receive the provisions.



Stories of grit, hope and determination

Tamilarasi is the oldest student in the 2019-20 batch of Community Education program. Her mother committed suicide and died when she was 13 yrs old and she had a miserable childhood. Her father struggled to bring up the four children. She was happy to get married, had 2 sons and her husband took good care of her. Her life plunged into deep darkness when her husband died in a road accident in 2018. She went into depression thinking about her future. “How will I raise my two sons without a job? What is going to be my future?” were her fears.

At this time through a social worker from CMC Hospital, Tamilarasi was introduced to Pravaham. Determined to build her life and give a good future to her sons she joined the course at Pravaham. In the beginning, Tamilarasi was depressed and always sad. She was afraid about how she would cope



with her studies after a gap of 13 years and compete with younger classmates. With counseling and love that she received from the staff and her classmates she started overcoming her grief and took part in all the activities. After completing 7 months of the program Tamilarasi is confident that she can take care of herself and her 2 boys. She is a hard-working student and now stands 2nd rank in her class.

She was moved to see the staff of Pravaham at her house with the Ration packages. She said “I don't feel orphaned any more. When a daughter is struggling mother will send rations to feed him. Likewise, Pravaham is thinking of us even when we are not there”. She thanks God and all those who supported her and helped her to turn a new chapter in her life.



Gayathri, student of Pravaham lives with her mother and her elder brother. Her father was an alcoholic and left the family when they were young. Though he lives two streets away he never talks to the children or supports them. Gayathri's mother always dreamt of sending her children to college and seeing them in good jobs. Single-handed she brought up the two children working as a maid and doing some odd jobs and educated them up to class 12. She couldn't afford to give a college education for her children. She went around asking for a loan but in vain, so she sent her son to work in a mechanic shop. The earnings of both the mother and son were just enough to pay the house rent and cover food and other expenses. She heard about Pravaham from a friend and got her daughter enrolled. Gayathri's dreams of getting her diploma and work as a Nursing Aide were fulfilled.

Corona Virus has badly affected their livelihood. With no savings to fall back on and no work, they survived on Rice porridge(Kanji) for many days. Gayathri's mother says this relief has come at the right time to give them life.

Success stories of Vishnupriya and Indhumathy

It is always a great joy to see our students visit us and share their success stories. Vishnu Priya and Indhumathy, former students of Pravaham (2018-2019 batch), who are working in the 'Spring Valley Assisted Home for the Elderly', near Vellore, visited Pravaham on the 13th of March. They were beaming with confidence and the satisfaction of standing on their legs was written large on their faces. They were thrilled to show us their new bikes bought with their salary. They shared their success stories with the present batch of students and distributed sweets to all the students and staff. Vishnu Priya says “Two years back it looked like my dreams will remain a dream but today, thanks to Pravaham, I can achieve more than what I had imagined. My greatest satisfaction is that my widowed mother need not depend on my relatives for financial help. I am confident that with God's help we can overcome all the obstacles and build up our lives.”

Indhumathy said that she was able to relieve her family's financial burdens and repay some of their loans and this brought a lot of peace to the family. Her mother, despite having a lot of health problems, used to leave the house at 4 am to sell vegetables and come back late in the afternoon. After Indumathy started earning, her mother can relax a bit and take care of the family.



Visitors to Pravaham - January to June 2020



Dr. Manoj Chacko and Ramabai Chacko
Australia



Mr. G. Viswanath & Dr. Aruna
Governor Rotary club, visakapatnam.



Dr. Geoff Levin & Mr. Joy Levin UK



Students from SAIACS Bangalore



Ms. Sonia Gurnamal Hong Kong
Ms. Monica Chadwani Dubai

Many of our friends make it a point to visit us, despite Pravaham being remotely located. They share their time and talents with the students and the community. Their visits are always encouraging and uplifting.



Mr. John Rams-Bottom & Mrs. Mary White USA



Mr. Thomas & Mrs. Vasantha Thomas
Puducherry



Dr. Angeline & Mr. Christopher Raja kumar
Chennai



Dr. Prashantham
Christian Counseling Center




Ms. Deepali Prashantham
Shanghai, China

Visit from our Partners:

Ms. Catherine Nicholas, Co-Executive of Global ministries USA made a brief visit to Pravaham in spite of her hectic schedule, on the 9th February, 2020. She spoke to the students and encouraged them to pursue their goals in spite of many challenges they face.

Mr. Bern Kapps, General Secretary, CEF, Kassel, Germany along with Ms. Claudia Brinkmann-Weiser, Chairperson, Protestant church, Kassel, and Mr. Olaf Dellit, Christian Journalist visited Pravaham from February 21st to 24th. During their visit they had interactive sessions with the students and staff. They visited the homes of some of the present students, and also the former students at their workplace at 'Amazing Love Home' in Chennai. Their visit was a great encouragement to the students and staff.



 We are deeply grateful to you for your prayers, support and commitment to the cause of Pravaham, which encourages us to go forward towards our vision. Our prayers are with you. Keep safe and stay protected knowing that God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.

Please pray for:

- God's protection on all the students and their families.
- For Admissions 2020-21
- Placement of the present batch
- Senior Citizen's Home to start in Pravaham
- Van for transportation
- Committed staff for Pravaham

Contributions can be sent to :

Local Contributions :
Pravaham

A/c no.10507878408

IFS code - SBIN0002203

State bank of India

Vellore Branch (02203) Bagayam.

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For more information www.pravaham.org