

U.S. Pavilion Newsletter

May – August 2007

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Edited by Avipro

The summer months at the US Pavilion were silent. Particularly this murky summer, that was hot though not very dry, saw a lot of people leave Auroville and the grounds of the US Pavilion remain hushed. Raji, Ramprasad, and Ing-Marie took care and worked on odd jobs, silently staying on top of the heat and solitude, instead of giving in to them. The arrival of SAGE students, in mid-July, was a welcome change back to the youthful energy at the Pavilion.



SAGE Students Stay at US Pavilion

19 July – 23 July 2007



Each year the SAGE program offers high school students in grades ten to twelve (from the US, Canada and Europe) a travel and learning adventure in India, over three weeks during the month of July. The theme of this year's trip was: 'Art and Religion in India'. The students were hosted at the Pavilion and during the last few days of their stay were invited to create mandalas to express their experiences of being abroad (see above). We will love to have the SAGE group back again next year!

**To learn more about SAGE, please visit:
www.sageprogram.org**

**To read about the SAGE students' adventures, please visit their blog at:
<http://summerblog.sageprogram.org/category/artsreligions/>**

Caretaker Capsule Take Two: A Learning Experience

July 2007



What seemed to be the flawless construction of a caretaker capsule, reported in the last newsletter, turned out to be more of an adventure than expected. The bamboo we used was filled with insects, which was discovered after the building had been put up. So in July, the builders came again, took it down, and rebuilt it with casuarinas. Lessons to be learned? Know your bamboo and do check it for insects. Don't buy materials from just any builder you run into. Learn and go on. And always, *always* keep smiling.

On the Ground: Varagu!

August 2007

Many thanks to the neighbors of the U.S. Pavilion, who suggested we grow varagu (millet) in the lower field of the compound, and helped us to put it in. The field, which by some estimates hadn't been plowed for twenty years, came under Murti's plow in early August. After weeding, composting and rain, the varagu was sown halfway through the month...Why varagu and what is it exactly? Varagu is nutritious dry-land millet, needing little irrigation, and it constitutes another step toward a fully sustainable U.S. Pavilion. It also helps to incorporate organic agriculture into consciousness of the Pavilion, its visitors and returning guests. Students staying with us in September will be invited to help in weeding the field, and those who are here in February can help with the harvest. In addition this rich, but somewhat forgotten crop, will appeal to our local neighbors, who already showed their appreciation on seeing varagu grown again.



Preparation for Living Routes Students

May – August 2007

The U.S. Pavilion team eagerly anticipates the arrival of the first 'Living Routes' student group, to stay with us during the monsoon season (<http://www.livingroutes.org>). Six students and one professor will be lodged at our pavilion and the remaining six students will stay at Tibetan Pavilion, between September 13 and December 19.

For us this means that we have to cover the front windows of the student rooms with canvas, so as to water-proof them. It also includes the adventure of preparing the composting toilets again, to accommodate more people. We have eight barrels ready now, in a follow up to the previous four.

The Living Routes students are also gearing up for their trip.

Check out their blog and follow their progress at:
http://www.livingroutes.org/weblogs/weblogs/auroville/2007_fall/auroville_2007_fall.php

Tayka's Auroville Experience

January – March 2007

Tayka is an undergraduate student of the University of Washington, who came to Auroville last spring with Professor Karen Litfin's study abroad program. An important part of this program is "Service Learning", in which the students join with workplaces in Auroville to get job experience in another culture. Tayka was drawn to 'Women's Empowerment through Local Livelihood'. W.E.L.L. is a project of the Auroville Village Action Trust, which trains poor village women in recycling wastepaper and guides them on to make their own production company. W.E.L.L. continues to help them with administration and marketing. Below is Tayka's short description of her experience at the project; a glimpse of the life-changing experiences of the students in Auroville.

**A full report of Tayka's experience can be found at:
http://www.auroville.org/environment/avag/WELL_new.htm**

I have met nineteen of the most beautiful women in the world. They are Tamil women from three different villages who come together everyday for work. While they might not sound spectacular or look extra-special at first impression, it has been through sitting with them daily for the last two months that I have come to understand yet a new meaning of beautiful.



I was initially very apprehensive about working with WELL-paper. I was unsure immediately, and then even more so when I met an Israeli couple in an empty disorganized room in Auroville and only one Tamil woman around. My second introduction was entirely opposite but still quite un-confirming. While all other students had met their destinations in Auroville, I was taken alone to a far village to a room on the second floor of a villager's house full of loud Tamil women who couldn't speak English sitting on the floor and weaving newspaper rolls into baskets. No one met us there, and I spent three days alone sitting on the floor not knowing what I was supposed to be doing, what I could be doing, or what these women were saying to or about me. I felt overwhelmingly like the new kid at school that doesn't fit in and is doomed to have a miserable time. Finally I was able to meet with Danny, of the Israeli couple Danny and Orly who run WELL, and was able to come up with work for me to do at WELL. As an outsider not connected with the program but able to spend hours there for seven weeks, I was could observe current operations in the workshops and between the women and report my feedback and findings to the program creators. For myself, it was an incredible opportunity to meet the oppressed women I'd been reading about and the local people of India, especially those native to the area we'd be studying and living in. Little did I know, it was to bring so much more...

This Just In: Baby Boy Sasha Shanti Tollas is born!

16 August 2007

Congratulations to former U.S. Pavilion caretakers Nadia, David, and Tristan, for the birth of their new baby boy!

Sasha Shanti Tollas

Date: Thursday, August 16, 2007

Time: 4:45pm

Weight: 9lbs, 10oz

Length: 54cm

We celebrate with you the new addition to your family!

