



# OMHS

*Social change through  
education of the  
underprivileged*



November '08

FRIENDS OF OLCOTT



## Inside

OMHS is bursting with young and eager scientists as our school prepares ten projects for presentation at the Tamil Nadu Science Forum taking place next week.

An initiative headed by Roshini Kumar, OMHS counselor, and Lakshmi Suryanarayanan, OMHS headmistress, has been launched with an aim of community outreach to the areas where our students are coming from.

## Tamil Nadu Science Forum Ignites a Fire at OMHS

This is the second year OMHS is participating in Tamil Nadu Science Forum and this year, we have taken the competition to another level. With ten projects going on, students are learning about a range of subjects from termites to energy conservation. This year's Forum is entitled 'Save our Earth' and has inspired students to develop their scientific skills in order to assess problems that affect our Earth and to find probable solutions.



**Students observed Mangroves inside the Theosophical Society.**



## Unearthing the Truth

Sixth Standard students boldly question the watchman at Pallikaranai to get answers. They discovered that 150 lorries dump in this precious wetlands which is home to a variety of different birds, reptiles, fish, and other organisms. It is also the largest natural ground water recharge area and many communities depend on it for water supply.

The projects have taken students to Auroville in Pondicherry to explore sustainable living, solar science and organic farming, to The New College to learn from soil biologist Dr. Sultan Ismail, and to Pallikaranai along with WWF Dr. Dakshinamurthy to bird watch and to view the tragic story of the demise of the marshland due to twelve years of garbage dumping.

The following projects will be presented at the Tamil Nadu Science Forum this coming week on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2008.

**Solid Waste Management:** Five eager sixth standard students are creating waves at OMHS by implementing a solid waste management program that involves separation of non-biodegradable garbage and composting of biodegradable waste. They are experimenting with different methods of composting as well as involving the entire student body in a movement to properly dispose of garbage.

**Benefits of termites:** This project aims at researching termite habitats and their benefits to the natural world. The end goal is to create awareness to the public about termites and to offer alternative, natural options for termite as well as general pest control.

### **Soil Varieties/Urban Planning:**

Students have been testing different soil varieties and combinations to find the best. Also, they are working on urban planning rooftop gardening ideas to implement in areas where access to soil is limited.

**Wetland Biodiversity:** Students have been observing wetland areas for the past two months, recording all that they see and discovering the different relationships between all of the organisms that exist in a wetland area particularly in the Theosophical Society's Mangrove sanctuary.



Students playing at Johnny's Place in Auroville.

“I’m excited when I come to school everyday because I get to be a part of the TNSF science project.” – 6<sup>th</sup> Std student

**Household Energy Conservation:** A group of ninth standard students have attacked this project from all angles. Their aim is to bring awareness to the general public by tabulating household energy usage and linking these numbers to give an ecological footprint. To carry out this task, the group has created a survey and they have looked at three levels of economic background.

**Traffic Pollution:** This group has been recording data on the number of different vehicles that pass through a particular main street in Thiruvananthapuram. They have taken these numbers and tabulated the contribution to the different elements of traffic pollution from each type of vehicle on this road for one year.

**Native/Non Native Trees:** This project focuses on the effects of non native trees in particular regions of India. Students have looked at areas in Auroville, such as Aranya Forest, where community members are making an effort to propagate native species that are close to extinction. A history of the origin of particular non-native species has also been traced.

**Organic/Inorganic farming/food:** Students in this project have looked at various organic farming methods, such as panchagavyam. Additionally they have been preparing a variety of foods using local grains and they have compared pricings of foods in the local organic store (ReStore) and other inorganic food stores.

**Negative effects of Fishing:** This group is led by a student that is the son of a fisherman and therefore has a keen sense of the sea. The project involves looking at the negative effects that fishermen pose on the balance of the sea ecosystem particularly due to their capture of what they view as ‘waste’ organisms other than fish.

**Groundwater Problems/Solutions:** This project looks at the host of groundwater issues present in the city of Chennai and at solutions that the government is trying to implement. The group has learned about rainwater harvesting and they also have been shadowing the local water department officials on trips to test the water in different areas of Chennai city.

## Building a Bridge Between OMHS and Family Communities

Roshini Kumar, OMHS counselor, and Headmistress Lakshmi Suryanarayanan are working on building a bridge with the parents of students in order to efficiently support children from all angles. The idea is to open lines of communication between school and parents by holding ongoing parents programs at the school as well as community dinners. Both of these, in different ways, are trying to build relationships with parents in order to work together.

The target of the school programs is to invite parents from one standard at a time to come and discuss relevant issues between us regarding their children. Miss Roshini says, 'it is about what we can do as a team to support the student. We look for parent input, and offer tips and techniques according to the appropriate age. We also find out if they have any individual family needs.' This project is being done in cooperation with the Center for Counseling led by Madalene Jeyarathnam.

The community dinners are a way to build relationships with the parents. The idea is to go to the community without any specific school agenda and simply get to know them. Thus far, community dinners have been held in Chemincherri and Urur Olcott Kuppam.



Mothers of Urur Olcott Kuppam's primary school children.

### TEACHER OF THE MONTH: R. LALITHA



R. Lalitha & daughter  
Kamakshi

A former student of OMHS up through fifth standard, Lalitha teacher returned to give back to the school that provided her the stepping stone of her youth education. In the past 11 years, she has taught the primary section as well as Maths and Science in the main wing. This year, she has taken the position of Primary Section Coordinator and she keeps things running seamlessly. In addition to keeping the wheels turning in the primary section of our school, and managing a household, she has also opted to aim for her B.Ed in special education through Tamil Nadu Open University. She has already completed her B.Sc in Chemistry as well as her MA in Tamil. With fond memories she says that OMHS brought out the spirit in her when she joined as a teacher. "It became a place for me to nurture my creativity and develop leadership. This school has embraced me and supported me. Being at this school has made me believe that 'I can' and that is the same spirit I want to pass on to today's students."

# Thank You!

Upcoming Event: Children's Day  
Friday 14<sup>th</sup>, November 2008

We invite you to join us in celebration of Children's Day. The event will be held in our assembly hall and will be full of music, dance and drama.



OMHS: Friends of Olcott

I : November 2008

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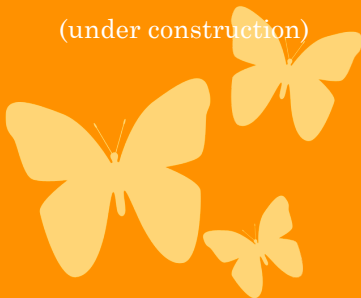
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## UNIVERSAL INVOCATION

**O Hidden Life, vibrant in every atom;  
O Hidden Light, shining in every  
creature;  
O Hidden Love, embracing all in  
Oneness;  
May all who feel themselves as one  
with Thee,  
Know they are therefore one with  
every other.**

**-Annie Besant**