



TOUCH THE SOIL

Team Outings with a Purpose!

Team Corp, Vijayakumar Goud, Venkatesan N, M Gurusubramanian, Rajinikanth G, led by Karthik S N, met 433 students in Vellore.

"It was a very satisfying day, after having created a positive impact and having triggered the minds of the 250 students. It was a team outing with a purpose where we had an opportunity to learn by interacting with the inquisitive minds."



Karthik and team in Arakonam



Students with the volunteers

Team Ullas, Rajeswary Vinoth, Nagalakshmi, Gomathi, Lalitha J, Anantha Narayanan and Afreen (BSC 33), led by Col. Vidyasagar, met 198 students in Vellore.

"As a part of the Ullas Touch the Soil program, we had the wonderful opportunity to visit St. Charles Govt. Higher Sec. School at Athnavoor, Yelagiri, Vellore District.

We reached the venue after a 5 hour drive from Chennai, and met the children gathered in the assembly hall. Most of the children belonged to tribal families from the hilly areas. After a brief session on Ullas, Col. Vidyasagar - Head, Ullas Trust, conducted the workshop.

During the session we realized how passionate the children were in realizing their dreams and making an effort to pen them down in the diary of dreams. We felt that the proverb: "Helping hands are better than praying lips" - was true, when Malar, a school topper, shared with us how important the scholarship was to her. She felt motivated and financially stronger after receiving the scholarship cheque.

It was the first time such a workshop was conducted in that school and the students almost broke into tears when receiving the scholarships. The headmaster thanked us for initiating the program in their institution.

Ashok Kumar from BSC 31, along with his family and Guruji (Swami Sadhu Balanandha) of Vallimalai temple, met 160 students in Vellore (Vallimalai).

"The school management and the students were very delighted with this Ullas initiative to cover rural schools and encourage the financially backward students. They were happy that our support will motivate and make students respect education, as many parents don't encourage their children in their studies. The school supported the 'Touch the Soil' program despite the challenges they faced due to a power failure. They expressed their eagerness to have such similar programs at their school regularly.

The school as well as students were happy to receive the scholarships from the respected Guruji (Swami Sadhu Balanandha), who has helped the villages, and the school."



Students receiving their scholarship



Volunteers interacting with the students

Team BSC 01, Sunil Attarde, Sindhu S, Saritha A, Sathish T and Sujith Kunnumul, led by Saisri, met 354 students in Vellore (Ranipet).

"Interacting with students from Class IX, we explored the achievements of great role models like Mahatma Gandhi, Abdul Kalam, Mother Theresa, Sachin Tendulkar, MS Swaminathan and our CEO Arun Jain.

It was a bolt from the blue to hear such wonderful responses from the children about their future dreams. 5 toppers received scholarship awards from Ullas, and we ended the day giving autographs to the children who were inspired by Ullas!"

A note from Col. M Vidyasagar - Head, Ullas Trust:

Malar is one of the class toppers currently studying in the Govt. Higher Secondary school at Athnavoor village, Yelagiri hills. She comes from a native tribal community from the Jawadha hills. What is so special about Malar? For one, her father is speech and hearing impaired. Two, her mother is a maid working in one of the residences that dot the tourist resort. She felt motivated on receiving a scholarship cheque of Rs 1000 at the Can Do workshop which the Ullas team conducted a fortnight ago in her school as part of the Touch the Soil program.

As this issue rolls out and is read by you, twenty waves of Polaris volunteers, (each wave comprising of 5 member teams) went on a blitzkrieg to cover 81 schools in 17 districts of Tamil Nadu. They brought cheer in the hearts and minds of children like Malar who have only experienced adversity and the harsh grind of economic discomfort, just to make it to school in pursuit of their aspirations.

Our teams got an opportunity to interact with such young minds and did their bit in triggering their self belief as per the framework of the workshop. We bring you a glimpse of what the teams witnessed. Emboldened by this overwhelming support from associates, we have given ourselves a commitment to widen the scope of this program which provides you an opportunity to reconnect with your roots and to ensure that Ullas has a footprint in every district of Tamil Nadu before the closure of this academic session in March. We should be in a position to have impacted around 20,000 young lives, which is twice the figure that we initially targeted to make a difference.

A special thanks to the budding volunteers who enrolled for this program and who came back seeking more such interactions with the wider community. The program continues till 4th March and is all set to roll out in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh very shortly.



Sridevi & team conducting the Diary of Dreams

Team Corp Finance, Nandhini K, Sri Ganesh, Saravanan G & Anand K, led by Sridevi T E met 330 students in the Kanchipuram district.

"We were amazed to see the children's energy level, boldness, clear vision about their future and sound knowledge in current affairs. Almost all students came forward to share their dreams. The formula for success DCCP (Determination, Conviction, Planning & Perseverance) will certainly do magic. If adequate training and grooming is provided, we are sure to see more Kamarajars, Kalams, Kalpana Chawlas, Gandhis and Gates. A wonderful initiative! Kudos to Ullas!!!"

Team BSC 02, Ganesh Viswanathan, Manjula Gopalakrishnan, Sundaresan Viswanathan, led by Brindha Michael met 367 students in the Villupuram district.

"Actively participating in the discussions, the children were able to visualise and express their opinion, and had great respect for us. The students participated actively and enthusiastically. They had written their dreams and visions in the diary and some enthusiastic students came up to the podium and expressed their dreams. They were able to understand the aim of the session and promised to bring laurels to the school and their parents."



Students penning their dreams down

Team BSC 01, Anu Mohan, Usha S, Shivakumar, led by Venkat Vempati, met 555 students in Villupuram.

“It was heartening to see the level of enthusiasm in the children. They were really excited to see us and several of them shared their dreams. It was very touching to know the grit and determination they show by coming to school in the face of the various issues that they encounter. We heard their dreams of becoming an IAS officer, a lawyer, a science teacher, a social teacher, an IPS officer, an SI of police, an astronaut, a computer software engineer and many many more. Everybody in the team wishes to participate again, mingle with bright kids and do an even better job of inspiring them.”



Venkat Vempati & team with the students

Team BSC 31, Sanjeevi Baskaran, Vimal Mohanraj, Vakula Damodaran Jayanthi Ramaiah and Yadavalli Rajasekhar led by K PariBhaskar met 250 students in Manali.

“The children were eager to learn new things, and they had the ability to grasp what was taught very easily. They were all responsive to most of the questions asked, and though some of them were wrong, they did not shy away from answering.”



Volunteers with the students



Srikanth gives away the scholarship

Team BSC 01, Bharathkumar, John Innala and Amaravelkani V, led by Srikanth P, met 603 students in the district of Tirutanni.

“It was an interactive session, and the presentation by Ullas inspired the students as well as the teachers. The teachers who were present at the session appreciated the workshop and were also pleased with the way the students interacted with them. It was a wonderful team effort, with all of us actively involved and engrossed in the workshop. Each member of the team was happy with the way things went and we all felt it was a purposeful day.”



Writing in their Diary of dreams

Team Corp Admin, Sekar Kannan, Avijith Chatterjee, M Saravanan (Corp Quality), led by P R Venkatesan met 690 students in the Tiruvallur district.

“The financial condition of the scholarship awardees was very poor. In fact one of the awardees, Natarajan, assists his father, a weaver, before coming to school. His sister, when asked what she would like to change in India, with tears swelling in her eyes, responded that she will enforce total prohibition of caste discrimination. The children were emotional on receiving the cheque, and their teachers were very grateful.”

Team BSC 01, Ananthan, Sundar KG and Somasundaram K, led by Ramasubramanian, met 394 students in the Senji district.

“The children responded very well and had no hesitation in sharing their dreams. The teachers, who attended the workshop along with the students, had expressed their happiness, saying that the workshop was even more significant for the students especially in the month of January, considering the annual exams coming up in the next 2 to 3 months.”



Scholars with the volunteers

Team Corp TAG, Venkat R, Sunil Raj, Karthi S and Sathiya Babu, led by Lakshmi Balaji met 600 students in Vellore (Jollarpet).

“We had a highly interactive workshop & it was so touching to see the overwhelming response. While presenting scholarships to the students, most of them opened up with their thoughts and ideas about the eminent personalities we were discussing about. We were awe-struck listening to 15 year olds, describing their vision and mission in life, and their dreams, making us feel that they have a lot to give to the world. Apart from this, the workshop was also a good team building activity and we look forward to repeating this experience in the future as well.”



Receiving her scholarship



Subramanian & team with the students

Team BSC 01, Chelliah P, Pramodh Mallik, Amal Angel Raj, Gabriel Raj, led by Subramanian G, met 935 students in Kanchipuram.

“The students enjoyed the workshop and they were even ready to skip their lunch so that the session can be extended! Almost all the students in the auditorium of 600+ came forward to share their dreams and vision. Most of the students spoke for a social cause, which was heartwarming.”



Ramesh Raghuraman & team interacting with the students

Team BSC 02, Mohan, Suguvanam.SP, Inbavel and Vasan, led by Ramesh Raghuraman, met 729 students in Villupuram

“Kudos to the Ullas team for igniting the minds of the children, and teaching them about various role models. The participation from the teachers and headmaster of the school was very encouraging and they welcomed this initiative from Ullas Trust.”