

Highlights of Activities of Karma-Yoga Leadership Experiential Project during July- Sep 2013.

## Director's Message

I take pleasure in presenting to you the second issue of our Karma-Yoga quarterly newsletter. Great Lakes Institute of Management (<http://greatlakes.edu.in/>) became a signatory to the United Nations Global Compact's Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) on 9 February 2013. This quarterly newsletter has been started with the objective of sharing with others the way in which we inculcate responsible behavior in our students.

Great Lakes Institute of Management incorporates a Leadership Experiential Project (LEP) as an integral part of its 1-year full-time Post-Graduate Program in Management (PGPM) and 2-year full-time Post-Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM). This experiential project at Great Lakes is called Karma-Yoga. All PGPM and PGDM students are required to do the project during their first term and get at least one credit for Karma-Yoga in order to successfully complete their programs. Starting from Term 2, the project is optional. Students can continue with the project and get up to 5 additional credits for Karma-Yoga. Out of the total of 600 students currently, 70% have chosen to continue doing the project beyond the compulsory term.

There are 20 villages surrounding the institute's campus that have been adopted by Great Lakes for the LEP. The objective of our Karma-Yoga project is to develop and maintain enriching relationships with the people living in our 20 villages. That people can be lifted into their better selves is the underlying assumption behind this empowerment project.

We organized the second annual Karma-Yoga convention on 24 Aug 2013. The Karma-Yoga annual convention is an all-inclusive platform that brings together farmers, businessmen, self-help groups, non-governmental organizations, students, local Panchayat leaders and every stake-holder relevant in the rural development schema together under one roof. The objective of the convention is to get selected people from our Karma-Yoga villages to interact with each other and with resource-persons on chosen themes.

*Venkat*

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## Convention

The Second Annual Karma-Yoga Convention, conducted at the Great Lakes campus on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2013, had over 160 participants (including panchayat presidents, women's self-help group leaders, school principals and teachers, farmers and students) from each of the 20 Karma-Yoga villages. [Mr. Vellore C. Srinivasan](#), a much sought after environmentalist and a member of the Planning Commission, was the Chief Guest. He enthralled the audience through his eloquent words, saying that “*the solution to a problem will always lie where the problem actually exists*” thus leaving the crowd with food for thought.

The inaugural session was followed by four discussion sessions on the topics:-

1. **Agriculture**:- Agriculture is full of dualities—(i) fertilizers and pesticides boost crop yield but also decrease soil fertility; (ii) best practices in agriculture require education but the educated are moving away from agriculture; and (iii) agriculture employs around 60% of the population but is contributing to the nation's GDP in ever-decreasing amounts. These inherent contradictions and other issues were raised at the “Agriculture” session. The speakers were Dr. Kumaravel, Director of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (Kaattuppaakkam), Mr. T.D. Subbu, an organic farmer, Mrs. Sabitha Rani Balaji, organic farmer cum activist, and Mr. Soundhararajan, farmer cum entrepreneur.
2. **Health**:- Alternative medicine and emerging trends in sanitation was the topic for the “Health” session. Several video clippings were shown and varied points of concern were raised, enabling the participants to put ‘health’, a relatively neglected issue in their daily lives, to the forefront. The speakers in this session were Dr. Saravanan, a Siddha medic at RUWSEC (Karumarapakkam), Dr. Dharmaraja, a homeopathy practitioner from Puducherry, and Mr. Vellore C. Srinivasan, the Chief Guest.
3. **Education**:- In the “Education” session, the first speaker, Mr. Theendhayalan, a teacher, instantly seized everyone's attention through his poetic introduction which emphasized the necessity of education right from childhood and the need to send children to school without fail. The second speaker Mr. Venkatesh, addressed the audience by introducing [Malala Yousafzai](#) and her contributions in the form of sacrifices for promoting education. The final speaker, Mr. Ram Kumar appealed to the villagers, coaxing them to recognize their self-worth and frame a mission statement to make their lives meaningful. By narrating various short stories, he tried to highlight the relevance of education in driving life towards continuous improvement.

4. **Self-Help Groups:** - The fourth session was a workshop for women from Self-Help Groups, hosted by Mr. Amutha Mathiyazhagan, a successful coach and mentor. He had the crowds enraptured right from the beginning, creating opportunities for them to express pride in their many successes as self-help group members and also discuss some of their current problems. This session, which is aimed at tapping the hidden entrepreneur.

Overall, this Convention achieved its objectives with participants from the villages leaving with freshly acquired knowledge about their everyday issues, speakers becoming accessible to these villages and proposing to work on long-term interventions in this region and camaraderie between the villagers and the Great Lakes students improving beyond expectations. Other highlights included the enthusiastic participation of Great Lakes staff and faculty who despite it being a holiday, chose to spend it with our villagers. What's more, the students while involving themselves in organizing this event, working behind the scenes for several weeks, palpably began to appreciate and respect each other -- a respect which will continue to grow.

## Highlights of Activities

### Blood Donation Camp – Neikuppi

Neikuppi Karma-Yoga team with the help of TamilNadu Science Forum conducted a Blood Donation camp in the village. At least 30 students from Great Lakes turned up on their 'Call for Donor' request. Transportation and refreshments were arranged for all the donors and the team also issued a blood donation certificate for everyone. With a total 85 donors, the camp was a huge success.





### **Medical Camp – Vittilapuram**

With the help of Rotary Club, Chennai, team Vittilapuram arranged a free medical camp at the government school in the village. The camp included general check-up, blood test, eye check up and dental check up. Pamphlets and audio announcements were used as instruments to promote the program which resulted in a massive response, with 250 villagers attending.



### **Self-Help Workshop Vasuvasamudram**

Team Vasuvasamudram arranged one 'Tie and Dye' workshop on 4th August 2013, focused primarily on the village women. A three hour workshop demonstrated the entire process of finding suitable raw materials, tying knots in different patterns, colouring and drying the sheet of cloth and finally opening the knots. A good number of village women attended the workshop, asked questions and acquired intricate knowledge of conducting the same in their homes.



### **Tutorial Sessions - Natham Kariacheri**

All the Karma-Yoga teams focused on improving education levels in our villages. Spoken English, basic mathematics and science classes were regularly held, while career counselling and crack-interview help sessions were organized for village youth in a couple of villages. A non-functional library has been reopened in Natham Kariacheri to help improve the overall education scenario in the village.



### **Relationship-Building Activity – Cricket Match Pudupattinam**

A 10-10-10 Cricket Match between Great Lakes Pallavas and PK Danger Dons has been organized in the village Pudupattinam as a step to strengthen the bond with the village boys. Another one was also organized between Neikuppi village team and Great Lakes. These events were full of fun, frolic and excitement.



### Independence Day Celebration

A bunch of villages celebrated our Independence Day in their own style. When team Neikuppi showed a video speech of Dr. A P J Abdul Kalam to increase national awareness amongst children, team Poonthandalam prompted the village students to arrange a show by themselves. Successful events were held that day in NathamKariacheri, Vasuvasamudram and other villages.



**Medical Camp:** “Health is wealth” is a commonly used phrase which is very uncommonly understood by general people. Those who have good health, do not understand its value while those who do not have it, can only crib about not having it. However, the Team at Kuzhipanthandalam village understood the importance of this one phrase and in collaboration with the RUWSEC hospital organized a Free Medical Camp for the villagers on the eve of our 66th Independence Day. They had set up the camp in the Village School and together with the support of the Doctors and Nurses, made the camp into a huge success by attending to the needs of over 150 villagers. 66 years later, on the same day when India got her independence from the British, the team at Kuzhipanthandalam took a step towards liberating the village from the shackles of its maladies



**Computer Classes:** As a result of their prior understanding of the importance of IT, the Teams at Amanambakkam and Pattikkadu started computer classes for children at their respective villages. The introduction of these classes was well received by children and their parents alike. While the team at Amanambakkam focused on teaching the MS office package (MS-Power point and MS-Word), the team at Pattikkadu focused on the creative aspect of using a computer by teaching the children how to draw and paint on the computer. Both programs gave a preview of what lies ahead in the coming months for the children.

**Science Club:** On 15<sup>th</sup> of August, the Team at Veerapuram celebrated India's Independence with the children in style. They participated with the children in a scheduled function, post which they inaugurated the Science Club in the village with the help of the Tamil Nadu Science Forum (TNSF). Mr Kumar, a representative of the TNSF showed the school children how science works and how everything around us is science. The children were very excited at the prospect of a science club in their school. Still, a major task of getting the local village Science Club affiliated to the TNSF remains at hand, and in the coming months, we are sure that this too would be accomplished.



**Literacy Drive:** “Education is the most powerful weapon which one can use to change the world”, was told to the world by the great South African leader, Nelson Mandela. This idea of his was spread across to the children and adults alike in the villages of Veerapuram, Amanambakkam, Pattikkadu and Kadambadi. English speaking classes have been held in all these villages for children and in some villages, undergraduate level students have been given assistance in their preparation for company placements and in their personality development. Some village teams even organized skits and invited speakers on September 8<sup>th</sup>, the world

literacy day, to teach children about the importance of studies in the development of a person into a good human being. The literacy drive wasn't a one-off event and will be carried on throughout the year by all the village teams who have started this program.



**Relationship Building Games:** Relationship building is an on-going process and is not built over a couple of days, taking time and effort. This is well understood by all the teams, and in their endeavour to cement the bonds which they share with the villagers, they continued to play games, and participated in team building exercises with the villagers so as to further develop trust and strengthen the relationship which they share with the villagers, as some friendships are for life.

