



BefriendBrief

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SOORYA UDAYAM ILLAM CELEBRATES PONGAL 2008



Pongal Pongal is a harvest festival that is celebrated for three consecutive days every year, especially in the province of Tamil Nadu. We had the privilege of being present at this event. The sun, the harvest and the animals are blessed and thanked with special rituals. The houses are decorated with the most beautiful crayon drawings (kolams) which bring luck. Sugar cane and a specially prepared sweet porridge (see picture right) are symbols of abundance. During these days the children are in a kind of excited St. Nicolas mood. They get to play games, they receive sweets and also now presents from the Netherlands, and traditionally everyone receives new clothes as well!



Crayon drawing competition (Kolams) Also see picture above



New flip-flops for Pongal



'Bite-the-cake'

■ COMMUNICATION THROUGH DRAWINGS

The Christmas envelope campaign which was held at the Jan Hekmanschool in Ouderkerk a/d Amstel for the second time (see the previous newsletter) again produced beautiful drawings with sweet messages for the children at Soorya Udayam Illam. The drawings were greatly admired and a selected few were discussed in the group. In reply drawings with messages were returned and these were taken back to the Netherlands and hung in all classrooms of the Jan Hekmanschool.



■ SPENDING THE NCDO SUBSIDY

This subsidy will be partly spent on extending the central hall with a classroom. To inaugurate the building a *puja* was held. *Puja* literally means honouring, and it involves a common, and often complex consecration ritual that can be held either in the temple or at the site. The photograph shows the symbolic 'consecration' of a number of bricks.



In addition to paying for a new classroom this subsidy was also used for all sorts of educational expenses, such as bicycles for going to school, school uniforms, school bags and two computers.



■ COMPUTER SKILLS AND CREATING CHANCES

Two computers, however, are not enough for setting up a computer information centre in the new classroom. A comprehensive instruction programme has been set up with various modules so that soon many chanceless youngsters can be taught computer skills.

This is a very important facility for really giving poor children a proper chance to participate in modern society. We have registered this project called **COMPUTERVAARDIG EN KANSRIJK** (Computer skills and creating chances) with the new Internet platform for development projects. www.1procentclub.nl

On this site you can support this specific project and view a detailed project proposal including budget.



■ INDIAN BENEFIT MEAL FOR BEFRIEND

Sheela van der Borgt and Petra Zuidema of the Feniks film company together hatched the idea of precede a screening of the movie "Wie kijkt er door mijn ogen" [Who is looking through my eyes], about the life of the Indian philosopher Tagore, at the Cinescope cinema in Almere on March 1st, with an Indian meal. Part of the proceeds would be for the Befriend Foundation. A menu was put together, which was then meticulously, and with great organisational talent, prepared by Sheela.

This formula was a great success and is worth repeating; a delicious meal, a beautiful movie at a nice location and about Euro 500 for Soorya Udayam Illam.



■ BEFRIEND HELPS BLAGOE DELO WITH FUNDRAISING FOR A NEW KITCHEN

It takes time and money to set up a Foundation, which can be an obstacle to small good causes. We have decided to use our position as a legal entity and our knowledge about fundraising on an ad hoc basis as well for other projects. One such project is the relief project **BLAGOE DELO** in Russia for people with physical or mental restrictions.

We consider it a privilege to be able to do our Dutch bit for this internationally supported project and to help coordinator Henk Poppenk with publicity and fundraising. The "Wilde Ganzen" [Wild Geese] Foundation has pledged its support for the new kitchen. The NCDO is still considering our application. You can read more about this on our website. Soorya Udayam Illam remains our principal project. Unless specified otherwise, all donations will go to this project.