

Welcome to a world of words

PEOPLE Ninety-odd children of the Nari Kurava School in Saidapet now have a library, thanks to the social responsibility initiative of a well-known corporate

A library at the Nari Kurava School in Saidapet is the combined effort of the employees of the Apeejay Surrendra Group as part of its Individual Social Responsibility (ISR) programme. Inaugurated recently, it hopes to fulfil the reading needs of 90-odd children between classes 1 and 8 of the school.

"This is our first ISR initiative in Chennai, a brick and mortar one by our employees. The Apeejay Anand Children's Library was first started in Kolkata in 1992 and now has three branches across the country but the one in Chennai is a unique combination of CSR and ISR," says Renu Kakkar, vice-president, Apeejay Surrendra Group. "The walls are covered with words. Our employees have painted the premises themselves, bought fans and in-

stalled the bookshelves. They have all put in individual effort and created the library from scratch," she adds.

While a few hundred books line the shelves, at present, Apeejay hopes the library will continue to grow through its efforts. "We asked the school for a list of books they wanted and our bookstore, Oxford Bookstore, went directly to the publisher to get them. Of course, there were a few we couldn't find. But we are orga-

nising the Kolkata Literary Fest in January where, through a Book Bank Program, we will ask all the participants to bring a book along with them to donate to the library," says Renu.

The ISR initiative enables people to share their skills. "Our volunteers will continue to share their skills on a weekly basis and will be permitted by the company to do so even during office hours," says Renu. "It depends on when the skill is needed. Everyone from

our youngest to our oldest employee will be involved."

Apeejay Surrendra Group also offers an award to volunteers across the country. Called the Apeejay India Volunteer Awards, it aims at awarding NGOs and corporates who have good volunteering policies. "In fact, that's how we came across the Nari Kurava school," says Renu. "We chose Vaishnavi Srinivasan of Bhoomi for our 'Youth Volunteer of the Year' award last year. She works with children in this school and when we enquired whether we could help in some way, she wanted to use our skill sets and we came up with the idea of a library," she adds. "All our educational support programmes are at the grass-roots level."

ANUSHA PARTHASARATHY



A TREASURE TROVE Students exploring the new Apeejay Anand library in their school

This is our first Individual Social Responsibility initiative in Chennai, a brick and mortar one by our employees

Renu Kakkar