

Withouts of Vellore

Vellore is nearly 140 kms from Chennai and falls under the RI District 3230. The place can be extremely hot in summer as it is surrounded by rocky hillocks. The town boasts of an excellent hospital, Christian Medical Centre, which has been attracting patients earlier from all over India. Those who know the place well recollect what was known as the 'Withouts of Vellore.' Some of them are, Fort without garrison, Moat without water, Temple without God and Police without power!

The town also has the much publicised prison which was established by the British in 1867 and many of our leaders have been lodged there during the struggle for independence. Prisoners who were physically unfit to travel to Andaman were also lodged here.

When the community is without something, Rotary steps in and tries to find a solution. The welfare measures also extend to inmates of the prison and Rotary Club of Vellore has been specialising in this area. The club provided educational aids to the prisoners and several inmates have passed their school final examinations thanks to the effort of Rotary. Periodic health check-up camps are held inside the prison and this includes treatment for ENT and skin disorders. Vocational training programmes are conducted and the club has provided 15 sewing machines. This sewing department has helped many inmates to learn a new skill and reform. Thousands of trees have been planted which has given a green cover inside the prison. The prisoners were provided with carom and chess boards and this kept them engaged in a friendly atmosphere inside their cell. Courses on stress relief are being conducted to keep their spirits alive and hopes for finding a career when they get out of their confines. For those who have been certified as fit to merge into the mainstream of the society outside, campus interviews and placement services have been planned!



Inauguration of bore well by Sri E. Subaya, Minister for Law, Government of Tamil Nadu.

The scheme to sink bore wells and meet the water requirements of the prison was discussed by the club and soon a matching grant programme was put in place. Rotary Club of Vellore, along with RC Madras North, RC Fair View Heights USA and RI District 6510 came up with their contribution which was matched by The Rotary Foundation. The 230 feet deep bore well was sunk and with the support of RC Nanganallur, RI District 3230, RC Geoje Big Dragon, RI District 3590 and TRF, a reverse osmosis plant was also set up at a cost of Rs.2.4 lakhs. On June 16, 2011 the facility was inaugurated by the Minister of Law, Government of Tamil Nadu, Mr. E. Subaya. The submersible pump draws the water to the overhead tanks and through a well laid out distribution pipe network the water reaches the inmates.

The President of RC Vellore, Rtn. D. Thirumaran and the District Governor 2010-11 Rtn. G. Olivannan must be complimented in paying attention to the needs of the people where ever they are. Being inside a prison can even break a person. But the will to reform and the message that all hope of living a dignified life outside is not lost is given to

the prisoners by Rotary. By providing basic amenities that is allowed inside the prison, the club hopes to mitigate the suffering of the inmates and make them look within themselves on how they can once again contribute to the society's development.

Talking about the 'Withouts of Vellore' which were once a subject matter for joke in social circles, much of that has been set right now. The temple has a God now and there is water in the moat. But one more item can be added in the future to the 'Withouts of Vellore' list. It should be 'Jail without prisoners.' The humanitarian programmes of The Rotary Foundation can do this and 'without' the TRF much of what a club does is not possible! And 'without' Rotarian's support TRF cannot get the funds to implement big projects around the world.



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