

# Summer camping goes rustic

## City children to camp in village, live the life of a rural kid

By **Omer Shariff**  
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ARE YOU wondering what course to enrol your child in during the summer vacations? Should it be the usual art class, which your child has attended for the past two years? Or a computer course? Or maybe a theatre workshop? Well, here is one more option open to you. This one promises to be different from run-of-the-mill summer camps, where your child will learn all of the above and more.

Children's Love Castle Trust, an NGO is organising Ooru Habba - A village festival, in April. At this summer camp children from city will get to interact with their counterparts in villages and will participate in various cultural and literary activities. Totally four camps will be held over the duration of a month.

Founded in 1997 by Bhagya Rangachar, Children's Love Castle Trust is involved in organising activities for students enrolled in government schools. It has already adopted four government schools, one is located in a city slum and others on the outskirts of Bangalore.

Rangachar, who was formerly working as software professional in the US, gave up the job to return to India and start her work for children. "We work in tandem with local community. We try to establish community support system around the schools we have adopted. Response has been tremendous. People from all walks of life have come forward to assist us in our efforts. We believe that providing incentives like mid-day meals encourage school attendance. We also provide extra tuition to high school students with help of our volunteers."

The trust is building a learning centre on government granted land next to Jakkur Government School, where the summer camps will be held. Rangachar said the construction is almost complete.

Rangachar's pet project, the learning centre, has a library, a computer lab with 10 computers, a career guidance centre for high school students and an amphitheatre. "We chose to



Children of Jakkur Government School. They will interact with their counterparts from the city during Ooru Habba

locate it next to Jakkur school because it is the biggest school we have adopted and 850 students from nearby villages attend this school. The whole idea of the venture is to provide to these students - free of cost - access to things that children in cities take for granted," she said. Speaking about the expenses involved, she said, "The project cost us around Rs 10 lakh and we would need another Rs 8 lakh for the second floor, which we plan to add on later in the year.

Additionally, we have to spend at least Rs 25,000 a month on the maintenance of the centre. We would really appreciate sponsorship from the corporates. The money that comes in through these camps will also help us realise our goals."

Children who enrol for the camps get to see the various aspects of village life first hand. Each camp lasts for five days. On the last day of each camp, children can stay overnight at

the centre, if they wish to. Those who enrol for the programme will be picked up by a bus each day from various points in the city and taken to the learning centre, which will serve as the base camp. While rural children attend computer classes during morning, city kids will be taken on a guided tour of nearby villages. Trust has planned visits to various colonies in a village - like weavers' colony, blacksmiths' colony etc. Various aspects of village life, village economics, the systems of farming etc, will be explained to children.

In the afternoon session, the city kids join their rural friends for lunch at the centre. Later they will take part in various activities together, which include art classes, folk songs, singing competitions, dance, etc.

Artists from Karnataka Chitra Kala Parishat are also involved in the project. Sandeep Bangera, a freelance artist and a graduate of CKP has helped in designing the programmes

at the summer camp. "Some children may not really be interested in art. So we have tried to make it interesting and fun for everyone. We have mask-making contests. The children can really let their imaginations run wild. Then we have activities like bridge building, using bamboo and ropes. And on the last day of each camp, we have made arrangements for children to stay overnight, with bonfires and all that stuff," said Bangera.

The first camp will be held between April 17 and 22, the second from April 24 to 29, the third from May 1 to 6 and the last from May 8 to 13. The fee for each five-day camp is Rs 2,000, including transportation. All the money goes towards construction of the learning centre. The camp is open to children between 7 years and 14 years of age.

For more details, contact Bhagya Rangachar at 334-9801 or 98440-64070.