

We're all in this together

A dynamic group of volunteers, Team Everest believes community involvement is the easiest way to catalyse social change and create better cities



TEAM EFFORT A study centre for children, and (right) a volunteer helping children to read

HEMA VIJAY

Imagine if each one of us volunteered to engage in some form of community service just once a month. Stepping out to teach underprivileged children, helping the elderly, assisting those with disabilities, cleaning up neighbourhoods, or greening the city... simple ideas, no doubt, but they could well be the blueprint for creating a better city. Well, that is the agenda of Chennai-based young techie Kartheeban C., founder of Team Everest, a volunteering network that originated in Chennai, going on to spread its wings in Coimbatore and Hyderabad, and all set to operate in Delhi, Pune, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Nasik and Vijayawada.

So, every weekend, courtesy Team Everest, Chennai sees

groups of people coming together. Some of them take a bus to the nearby villages, to coach children there and improve their academic and English skills so as to bring them on par with kids in city schools. Other groups set out to the government schools in their neighbourhood, orphanages, old age homes, participate in blood

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donation camps, or serve as scribes for visually challenged students.

"We organise a slew of activities every weekend. Volunteers can check these out and register for them on our website, or download our android app (Team Everest) on their phones to keep track of events and register, depending on what works best for them," says Karthee, who was the 'iVolunteer Hero 2012', and the Indian delegate who attended the Volunteering Conference - Points of Light at Washington D.C. in 2012. Currently, Team Everest has 8500 registered volunteers. In 2014, 13,000 hours of volunteering were done by 1200 volunteers registered with Team Everest. While some step out to volunteer, others operate from their own homes by volunteering their skills, and a few others do-

nate funds every month.

"Until I finished high school, I studied in a village school near Arni. When I came to Chennai for my higher secondary education, the contrast in the quality of education and other opportunities available to village children and city children appalled me. I decided then that I would do something to change this," says Karthee, on the spark that ignited Team Everest. Team Everest operates on a two-fold strategy: to facilitate volunteering, and promote the idea of volunteering among city people. "Even if I were to facilitate volunteering all through my life, I will not be able to reach an adequate number of people. But if I kindle the idea of volunteering among people, even children - it will have a multiplier effect," says Karthee. This idea has worked. For instance, after an event by

Team Everest, Vanshika, a Standard XII student in the city, got the bright idea of using the computers at her father's office, which lay idle on weekends, to teach underprivileged children. Meanwhile, the prize money of Team Everest's annual online and offline contests such as Contest for a Cause - Mesmerize are channelled to charity. "By getting the participating/winning kids to choose beneficiaries, we instil in children the joy of giving," he says. "Our cities and villages have too many grass root-level problems. Solving them all through a centralised body is not feasible. But if everybody did his bit for society, it would be a powerful catalyst of change," says Karthee. To connect with Team Everest, sms/whatsapp Karthee at 8939912365. So, what are you doing this weekend?