



ePaper

Search here



 Bright Spot | stories of humanitarianism, achievements and positivity

Teacher spends her savings to help pandemic-hit persons



Kathelene Antony

NAGAPATTINAM, DECEMBER 26, 2020 04:00 IST

UPDATED: DECEMBER 26, 2020 01:24 IST

SHARE ARTICLE



0



PRINT

A

A

A



Since March, she has distributed ₹35 lakh in assistance

The pandemic has taught the value of the piggy bank to many a family in distress. But a primary school teacher in Nagapattinam has been draining the savings of her family to help the needy.

Vasantha Chitravelu, 51, who teaches at a primary school at Andarkadu, Vedaranyam, is no stranger to altruism. She has always encouraged her students to seek help and has given their families financial assistance. She also bought over 1,500 umbrellas for students of several schools in Nagapattinam to reduce absenteeism during the monsoon of 2019. Once COVID-19 struck, she decided to reach out to the wider community.

On a typical day since the pandemic began, she wakes up at 4 a.m, after sleeping barely four hours, prepares food for nearly 200 people, distributes it along with dry rations, answers distress calls and visits and teaches her students.

“Since March, we have distributed ₹35 lakh in financial assistance and dry rations to those affected by the pandemic and the loss of jobs which came with it,” she said.

It all began in March when her students were about to complete the academic year but were forced to stay home to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Students then began to approach Ms. Vasantha, seeking her help to buy groceries and food.

Noticing that many of her students slept hungry, she decided to provide cooked meals to 200 people a day. “These are pregnant women in need of a nutritious meal, students, widows, patients and family members of those suffering from mental illnesses and senior citizens,” she said.

Ms. Vasantha was earlier preparing the food herself, but has employed a cook now.

Most beneficiaries are families of Ms. Vasantha's students and their relatives and neighbours; through them, many strangers have also sought help now.

Ms. Vasantha's phone number was announced on a local radio show in November. Since then, her phone has been ringing constantly.

"I receive calls from across Tamil Nadu from patients of various ailments, unable to afford treatment, people who have lost jobs and people with nobody to care for. For them, I transfer money to their bank accounts," she said.

"I come from a middle-class family, but my mother would give away rice, pulses, sugar and even money to whoever came asking. She taught us that helping the needy was far more important than savings," she said.

Of the ₹35 lakh, a sizeable amount came from the couple's savings, she said. While ₹12 lakh came from the salary of Ms. Vasantha's husband, a government school headmaster, who is on an extension of service for a year, the remaining amount came from the money saved for the wedding of the couple's younger daughter. "We decided to use it as our daughter said helping those in need was more important and she could manage to fund her marriage. If we need money for the wedding, we will take a loan," Ms. Vasantha said.

"There are people with a lot of money but do not know how to help. For them, my wife is an inspiration," said V. Chitravelu, Ms. Vasantha's husband.

Even with such a packed schedule, Ms. Vasantha has not forgotten her students. "I go to the houses of at least three students a day to teach them. While the affluent may have Internet and be able to attend online classes, my children have only me," she said.

Ms. Vasantha hopes to open a charitable trust to continue her work. “I want this legacy to live on. My children and their children must all continue to provide for people,” she said. Through the Vasantham Spring Charitable Trust, as she would call it, Ms. Vasantha hopes to reach as many needy as possible.

Printable version | Dec 28, 2020 9:27:47 AM | <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/teacher-spends-her-savings-to-help-pandemic-hit-persons/article33420612.ece>

© THG PUBLISHING PVT LTD.
