

The Economic Times

Date: 24th March, 2008

Anjana Alex Kandoth

# The Gift Of Knowledge

## **Tesco Staff Offer Their Services To School Kids**

'TREAT PEOPLE as how we like to be treated' – thus runs one of the core values of the Tesco Hindustan Services Centre and this is driving theme behind the company's corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives too.

Within a year of setting up shop in the country, Tesco HSC kick-started its activities in CSR space by connecting with the Cox Town School.

The company has been conducting health check-up camps in the school, which include workshop on AIDS awareness, hygiene awareness and sex education. It has also helped organized personality development programmes for the teachers of the school.

In addition, Tesco also provides monetary help whenever needed-whether it be for building toilets or for a roof over the stage. Going forward, the company plans to organize carrer for 9th and 10th standard students, and also sponsor the school Sports and Annual Days.

Ray Simon, manager, communication & recruitment, Tesco HSC, explains the company's focus on education. “Our programme revolves around the theme of 'empowerment through education' and we have been successfully engaging in different activities for the past three years. We belive we can achieve most when we work together on practical things that make a difference. The programmes which we engage with the students will prepare them to face the world confidently”.

The company also has a tie-up with Parikrma, an NGO dedicated to empowering children from the lowest economic stratum. It aims to provide a 360° development programme that

includes top-class ICSE English education, nutrition (three meals a day), healthcare and even family care, to 850 children from 26 slums. And the entire programme is free of charge.

Tesco HSC employees see this is an excellent opportunity to get involved. Points out Sandeep Shivprasad, officer, Financial Services at Tesco: “Parikrma is a boon to the economically challenged kids and most importantly has a well crafted teaching programme and a great value system – what better better way to be part of a better tomorrow!?”

Over 50 of Tesco HSC's employees visit PARikrma schools in Bangalore each week. The volunteers interact, teach and motivate the children in different fields of education. Each class goes beyond the syllabus, giving the students a better perspective on issues, and equipping them to deal better with the outside world. Everything under the sun is covered, from storytelling, arts, and music, to how to dismantle a bicycle and the evolution of frogs.

Tesco currently sponsors Standard I at the NGO' Koramangala school and will follow the class over the year until it reaches Standard X. This, according to Vivek Raju, the NGO's co-founder, is the great thing about Tesco. “It understands that change is possible only if there is commitment on a consistent basis. It's only education which separates people who have great jobs from from those who don't. And it is this rift that we are trying to narrow”.

In early 2008, Tescohelped Parikrma collect funds for their Change you World Programme—an initiative aimed at bulding a junior college for the children, and providing them with a more structured path to their future. Over 7—employees contributed by donating part of their salary, ranging from half a day to three.after deducting this amount from their payroll, a cheque of over six and a half lakh rupees was drawn.

The enthusiasm of employees is captured well by IT Program Manager Bharathi Govindasamy. “Threr is an urge to give back something to society and the CSR initiative provides the perfect opportunity for this. The other side of the coin is that the experience truly

enriches each one of us. Once you meet the children, their energy levels and enthusiasm are totally captivating – it's therapy for corporate stress,” she says. Tesco is also involved with the Hoodi school, a government- run Kannada medium school located 10 minutes from the company office. Volunteers visit the school weekly and help the children with mathematics.

The company also provides monetary help to the school. And on the cards are plans to build two toilets for the children, and install a radio. Tesco HSC has been diverting money, energy and time for children at all these schools. But what's most important are the softer issues.

As Parikrma's Vivek Raju points out, the greatest benefit is that these volunteers are now role models for the students.

“The kids see these successful people and they realize they can get there too. There's no division between them. It really helps break down barriers. And that's what makes all the difference!”