

brick by brick

For a better TOMORROW

MAKKALA JAGRITI

By Yamini P

FOR some, the journey begins and ends at the shopping mall near Koramangala. But for others, the journey begins a kilometre away, near Adugoddi. The destination is Makkala Jagriti.

Before joining Makkala Jagriti, most of the inmates were trying hard to figure out the contrast between the two. But the association with this NGO helped them look at life differently. Makkala Jagriti which began in 2003 is an endeavour of Joy Srinivasan. It runs community learning centres and provides learning opportunities for slum and underprivileged children.

"Most of the kids didn't know there was something called

reading a book. They were amazed to see story books, paintings, and drawings," says Joy. Most of them were distraught by the chaos and harsh realities of life. At a tender age, they are exposed to abuses as well as temptations. As they come from a poor background with less or uneducated parents, guidance also becomes a daunting task. Says she, "Parents of most of the children are not educated. Since there is no one to guide, most of them end up doing petty thefts and enter drug mafias."

The organisation came as a relief to them as one could see Saraswati, an eight-

year-old kid, trying her hand at puzzles at the organisation. Besides Saraswati, you can see various other faces who come in to enjoy the vacation. There is a huge painting on the wall which according to Joy is part of the kids' theme-based learning. "They are introduced to different themes which give them an idea of what's happening in the world," she says.

Joy's dreams are



Joy Srinivasan

Pict: Vinoo Kulkarni

centred around the participation of children at every level. "There were times when kids come in and hide behind the curtains of the room not knowing what to do. Now, they have gone a long way sitting and discussing issues," she says recalling incidents of theft of pens and pencils. "When the issue came up, I told them to sit together and find a solution which gives a space of their own."

Most of the kids come to Makkala Jagriti after school hours.

'Most of the kids didn't know there was something called reading a book. They were amazed to see story books, paintings and drawings,' says Joy of Makkala Jagriti

School dropouts usually come in the morning. "They come with emotional imbalances. Most of them lack concentration," she says. This is where the NGO plays an important role, according to Joy. As a part of this, they conducted projects at various centres in Bangalore—HSR Layout, Ulsoor, and Sheshadripuram. Most of the children are from Adugoddi, L R Nagar, and Vinay Nagar slums. "Political influences vary with slums. Though tensions arise at times, they are supportive," says Joy. Despite all these setbacks, an awakening has evolved among the children which is what 'Makkala Jagriti' (children's awakening) is all about—empowering them and making them self-sufficient individual human beings.



Children at a summer camp held at Makkala Jagriti