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Chennaiite is saviour for mentally-challenged kids

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Chennai: Sri Arunodayam Trust at Perambur in the city is a home for mentally-challenged children who have been abandoned by their parents.

Founder of the trust, Iyyappan Subramaniyan, a resident of Patel Road, has till now, rescued over 300 mentally-ill children abandoned on the streets.

For his service, Iyyappan won the 2016 World of Children Humanitarian Award, recognised as the Nobel prize for child advocates.

“Most children here were rescued by the department of Social Welfare or police through Child Helpline,” says this postgraduate law student, who is also qualified in disability and rehabilitation works.

Asked how he became interested in this field, Iyyappan says, “My elder brother suffered from Down Syndrome and my parents were aware of society’s judgmental indifference towards him. This irked me so much and made me open Sri Arunodayam Trust to provide a safe place for such children.”

Iyyappan adds, “I have been helping such children from the age of 21. I started Sri Arunodayam Trust in 2003 with a child I found abandoned on the road.”

Most of the children who arrived at this home were in pitiable condition. Some even came with serious medical conditions. We nurture each child as per their requirement with our rehabilitation process, which involves a wide range of activities. We also trace their parents and try to reunite them.

Iyyappan adds that his trust has rescued 325 children of which 77 have been reunited with their families. So far, 56 children have been transferred to other homes for specialised care.

At present, the trust houses 106 children. His 2016 World of Children Humanitarian Award comes with a minimum of \$50,000 grant over the course of three years. Iyyappan is using the money to expand his organisation's capacity to house and care for abandoned, mentally-challenged girl children too.

He goes on to add that there are many well-wishers and voluntary donors who come forward and help in buying items such as medicines and clothes. However, he claims that they are short of volunteers, who can spare some time with these children or teach them.

He is also happy to welcome some elderly people who can join the trust and take care of the children between 10 am and 5 pm.

Sri Arunodayam Trust is located at 35, Sivananada Nagar, Kolathur. Phone: 26511450, 9962280037. Iyyappan can be reached at 9444915803.
