

## Letting children be and allowing them to learn at their own pace



correspondent

### **V. Arun, who runs Marudam Farm School, has been honoured by Rotary Club of Madras**

Volunteers who have been part of the turtle walks organised by Students' Sea Turtle Conservation Network will not forget a senior in the team — 'Arun Anna' who has led hundreds of walks through the years.

Seven years ago, V. Arun and his wife Poornima left the city and started Marudam Farm School a few kilometres away from Tiruvannamalai. The school emphasises inclusive, alternative education that allows students to learn at their own pace.

# THE HINDU

On Tuesday, the Rotary Club of Madras conferred Mr. Arun with the 'Educator Extraordinaire' award for his contribution to the field of education.

The couple live in an organic farm in the village of Kananthampoondi that is powered only by solar energy. The school, located in the farm, teaches students farming, gardening, carpentry, tailoring and cooking. "We realise that each child learns differently, so we let them choose what they want to study," he says. Students decide whether they want to appear for examinations and which board they want to write.

"My son will appear for IGCSE (International General Certificate of Secondary Education) Board, but we allow him to take a call on whether he wants to write an exam or not. We have a number of students who struggle to read and write but they have exceptional skills in other areas," he says.

The school is part of an NGO called Project-The Forest Way, which is working with the community that undertakes afforestation activities on the Arunachala Hill. "We plant around 15,000 trees a year, and work with colleges to raise awareness. In addition, we also help fight forest fires on the hill," he said.

He is also working with the community to raise awareness of environment issues. "People have an innate love for nature, but most people in the cities are unaware of the various facets of nature. It is different in the village, where even young children are able to identify several species of flora and fauna," he adds.

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