An AVI-USA Friend Contribution

Your contribution is critical to our work on behalf of The City the Earth Needs.

Contribution Form
Please fill out in print letters, tear and mail to AVI-USA address below.

Your Name

Postal Address

Email Address

Check No.

Date (MM/DD/YY)

I would like to give $____________ per month (your bank’s online Billpay is the easiest way. Make check to AVIUSA at our PO Box below the payee).

Contribute Online
You can use your credit card via Paypal Foundation on our website at www.aviusa.org to give once or monthly.

For Planned Giving or a bequest in your will, we would love to connect with you via phone or email. Please contact us at info@aviusa.org or for any other assistance with making contributions.

Mail to: AVI-USA P.O Box 1534, Lodi, CA 95241-1534
AVI-USA Connect

Fall 2013 Newsletter

Issue 01

An Invitation
Being a Friend or Member 2
AVI-USA Connect Goals 2
The AVI-USA Board 3

Highlight
AUM 2013 4

Connections
Remembering Bhavana 8
A Momentum of Human Unity 9
American teacher trainer in AV 9

Events & Updates
AV Integral Institute of Health 14
AV International meeting in Spain 14
US Ambasador visits Auroville 15

Auroville Belongs to Humanity as a Whole.
from the Auroville Charter by The Mother

Auroville International USA (AVI-USA)
P.O Box 1534, Lodi, CA 95241-1534. USA
AN INVITATION

To our Friends and Donors

The AVI-USA Board invites everyone who has been touched by the ideals of Auroville since its inauguration in 1968 to become a Friend or Member of AVI-USA. Through this newsletter, our website and our online bulletin eVolve we hope to build an open and fulfilling communication with all of you who donate funds to projects in Auroville, support Aurovilians, visit Auroville and just stay connected to the work in Auroville which belongs to all of us who participate in it.

Become a Friend or Member of AVI-USA

Included in this newsletter is our contribution form on the back page. You can clip it out and send it in to AVI-USA, PO Box 1534, Lodi, CA with any amount of donation that fits your budget. You can also go online to the AVI-USA website at www.aviusa.org and use Paypal or Razoo to contribute. We will work to honor your experience and contribution as you honor our efforts with your donation.

Thanks from all of us.

AVI-USA Board Members 2013

Bryan Walton  
President

Mary Alexander  
Treasurer

Bill Leon  
Secretary

Julian Lines  
East Coast Coordinator

June Maher  
Founder

Jeanne Korstange

Raina Imig

Jack Alexander

Chetana Deorah
Our Work

We are an all-volunteer board. No paid personnel.
A small percentage, one twelfth of donations received supports our expenses as a non-profit under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS. The Board meets by phone once a month, and face-to-face once a year, often in connection with the annual AUM meeting. Board Members spend some weeks in Auroville every year or whenever they can.

The AVI-USA fiscal year is from July 1 thru June 30. Our Annual Fiscal Report for 2012 shows that $149,029.36 was received as donations to Auroville. As directed by our donors these funds were sent to the Auroville Unity Fund for the following projects: The Tibetan Pavilion, Housing, the Land Fund, Matrimandir, International House, Village Action, Auroville Education and Greenwork.

The Board Members want to thank all our Donors for their contributions for the on-going development of Auroville. While we are not currently living and working there, sending financial support is a way to participate in the life of the “Dream” which The Mother believed could become a reality.

Online at www.aviusa.org
The unity of all the nations is the compelling future of the world. But for the unity of all nations to be possible, each nation must first realize its own unity.

The Mother

To realize national unity ... the nation has to find its real self and to live according to that.

Sri Aurobindo

HIGHLIGHT

AUM 2013
Discovering the Soul of America: A Step Towards Human Unity

By Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke

With these mandates (quotes to the left) this year’s AUM was dedicated to the “Discovery of the Soul of the United States.” The core organizing team were John Robert Cornell, Soleil Lithman and Wolfgang Schmidt-Reinecke. The program was designed with elements from Soleil’s and Wolfgang’s successful Soul of Nations workshops given in Auroville and other countries.

About 90 participants made deep and enriching experiences through art, sound, movement, dyad exercises, guided meditation, group discussions, and Native American ceremonies. A strong component to the AUM endeavor was to seek integration with the Native American people and culture, which are the soul roots for the USA. Woman Stands Shining, a Dine (Navaho), was indeed a shining star. Her presence touched the entire audience. Her Summer Solstice Ceremony and drum journey led participants into the experience of the oneness with the land and our greater unity consciousness. She also took us into the shadow aspects of the US as we listened to the ongoing story of how Native Americans are still being poorly treated and how we are all in need of further healing because of this ongoing history of exploitation.

To further foster the development of the Soul of Nations work Soleil and Wolfgang will offer their workshop for interested Aurovilians and AVI’s in February 2014 in Auroville. Specific focus will be on the search of AVI-USA to manifest an American pavilion in the
International Zone. AVI-USA will invite its members as well as American Aurovilians to participate. AVI-USA is also inviting its members to support the Soul of work through donations.

The AUM gave inspiration to the founding of “A Center for the American Soul” headed by John Robert Cornell. Read the Statement of AUM 2013 expressing the dedicated spirit of this year’s meeting.

**Statement of AUM 2013**
By John Robert Cornell

*June 23, 2013, Ashland, Oregon*

We, the people, gathered from all over this land and from around the world, have touched, by direct experience, the deep soul-being of America. We invite citizens and friends of this country to acknowledge and celebrate the beauty of her soul light and to fortify themselves with it so as to do the true American work. That work is to confront honestly and to transform the shadow side of America’s past and present as well as to develop her inner soul qualities.

We further invite citizens and friends to acknowledge the crucial role Native Americans have played in constituting these United States, and welcome the equally crucial role they will play in bringing the soul qualities of this land to the forefront of American peoples.

We have discovered by experience that each nation, just as each individual, has a similar healing and transformative work to do: to confront the shadows of its past and present through soul discovery and to recognize and evolve the genuine qualities of that unique soul. This is an essential portion of the world’s evolutionary work. We believe that only through this transformation can nations rise up to play their part in the world symphony of the future in a progressive peace and human unity.

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**Meet AVI-USA President Bryan Walton**

Following meeting the Mother in 1971 as a visitor to the Ashram, she requested I establish and organize Fraternity in Auroville, at Her request, as the first handicraft training and employment center in early 1972. After much support and rapid expansion, and with quality production achieved, I opened export markets in Europe and the US. My wife Fanou joined the venture, and after having two children born in Auroville, we moved in 1980 to Wisconsin, where we began importing crafts from Auroville and elsewhere, via a store called Global View. I have placed many photos of my nine years there in Facebook’s group called “Olden Days: The Old Timers of Auroville.”

For the past twelve years, Fanou and I return to Auroville for at least a month every year or two. I have initiated a new project called AuroHost via AVI-USA, with funding from the FWE. Conceived by Gordon Korstange and Nilauro years ago, it is now possible for AuroHost to offer Auroville-minded travelers to link up with Auroville-minded hosts around the world. Check out aurohost.org, and register as a friend or a potential Traveler, or later even as a Host. As the administrator, I can accept you.
Reflections on AUM
By Andrea van de Loo, aka Angela
from Kottakarai, Auroville and now in Santa Cruz, CA

I so enjoyed our recent get together of Auroville and Integral Yoga folks at the AUM Conference in Ashland, Oregon. What a delight to spend some time renewing friendships with other ‘old-time’ Aurovilians, especially those still living there and meeting new ones. I admire the courage of the organizers to bring focus to the ‘Soul of the Nation’, since the very idea easily provokes undesirable associations with Nazi Germany. I thought it was most appropriate that Woman Stands Shining and David West, two remarkable Native Americans, were invited to contribute to our understanding and dialogue. I particularly appreciate Woman Stands Shining’s willingness to be open and vulnerable in her sharing with us.

I also thoroughly enjoyed Michael Miovic’s presence and his presentation on the American Soul in Popular Culture. How very fun!

I loved the enthusiasm of the group when participating in calling out both the soul qualities and shadow aspects of the USA and was struck by how unanimous we were about it. Most useful to me personally was the later exercise Soleil guided us through. We were asked to identify both the most desirable and the most undesirable qualities of the United States and then look at how we might identify with these in ourselves. The top quality I chose was ‘open-mindedness’ and the worst shadow ‘obliviousness’.

Not infrequently, I get confronted with my own obliviousness. I never fail to feel mortified and beat myself up about my lack of awareness. Gratefully and quite to my surprise, when we were guided to the next exercise to find the place in our bodies where this particular shadow lives and then connect it with the
psychic being or heart center, I only experienced compassion and understanding. I understood how my internalized terror as a young child from WWII and post-war traumas had created a powerful shield to protect me from the effects of the outside world and made me slightly ‘blind’. I could only be forgiven. I am now experiencing – on what seems to be a cellular level - an ongoing and spontaneous deepening tenderness in the love of myself. Remarkable. With that, it seems there is a thinning of the veil between me and the rest of Mother’s creation.

It seems that collectively we are opening to an ever increasing experience of human unity and maybe more importantly to the oneness of all of creation.

Meet AVI-USA Office Administrator
Lucille Seidlitz

I have been the contact person for the Lodi office of AVI-USA since September, 2011. My work consists of taking care of the donations from individuals and organizations and other relevant mail that arrives on a continual basis at our Lodi P.O. Box. I deposit checks, make all necessary copies for Mary Alexander our Treasurer’s and my records, and send the resulting paperwork to her to process and distribute funds accordingly to the different communities in Auroville. I also consult with Julian Lines, as needed, on similar related issues.

My association with Auroville and the Ashram began in the early 1970’s, when I first visited the ashram where my brother Vincent was living, and at that time I had my first meeting with the Mother.

This work for AVI-USA has been a constant source of gratification and joy. I feel honored to be able to make this contribution to AVI-USA.
A Legacy: Remembering Bhavana

Two years ago Julian Lines posted the notice of a fund raising drive on eVolve to build a micro loan fund through Auroville Village Action Group in memory of Bhavana, who left a legacy to all of us through her work to establish workshops and relationships with local Tamil Villages in the Auroville bio region.

On January 20, 2013 the Micro Finance Loan Project was inaugurated at Auroville Village Action Office in Irumbai. Along with donations from individuals here in the US and the other sources of funds the first loan checks were handed out to women from the 250 Women’s Groups who are participating in the program which has been in existence since 1995.

Assisting AVAG in creating this micro finance loan fund were members of AVI-Germany and the German Counsel from Chennai. Because of their work a grant came from the German government which matched funds raised by the local women’s clubs for the project.

- In 2011 the local village women raised $34,500.
- The German Government match for the village women’s fundraising was $187,553.
- An additional $27,992.00 was raised from donors outside of India through the AVIs and the German group Vfvar which was established to fund rural development projects in the Auroville bio region.
- AVI-USA donors and the Foundation for World Education contributed about $16,000. As of March 2013 a total of $250,045.00 was distributed as loans to members of the women’s clubs. The AVI-USA Board appreciates all those who contributed to this Legacy to Bhavana whose life work continues for the future development of these villages.

Aviram (2nd row, 3rd from right, center) with the New York study group
A Momentum of Human Unity
By Aviram Rozin

Being part of an evolutionary spiritual shift, I was always intrigued by the cradle of humankind - Africa! Having gained experience in reforesting drylands in India and Haiti, working in the African continent looked like the next step in our path of service.

In September 2012, Yorit, our children, and I visited northern Kenya and had an immediate and deep connection with the Samburu tribe. Neighboring tribes, admiring their beauty called them Samburu, meaning “butterfly.” The Samburu, light as butterflies, are semi-nomadic pastoralists whose lives depend on animal husbandry. After a recent series of droughts and frequent events of intertribal cattle rustling, the Samburu have become increasingly food insecure. Eighty-six percent of them live below the Kenyan poverty line. Following our first visit to Kenya we decided to set up the third Sadhana Forest in Samburu County and registered Sadhana Forest Kenya as an International NGO.

In June 2013 I visited New York and again spent a lovely time in Woodstock with the ever supportive Julian and Wendy Lines, and with a warm welcome by Dorathea and the NYC Sri Aurobindo Study Group. I felt so embraced by my Guru Bhais in New York and left to Haiti and Kenya happy and recharged. Our second visit to Samburu was very successful. Sadhana Forest Kenya purchased 11 Hectares of land for the training center and tree nursery and we are now ready to start our food forestry work side by side the Samburu people. The aspiration for human unity has lead us to meet and serve with so many inspiring people around the world, like the beautiful butterfly people.

AVI-USA thanks all the donors here who supported this new initiative.

Meghan Keil Murray: Teacher Trainer in Auroville

Editors Note: Since 1991 teacher’s from the USA have gone to teach and train teachers in the Auroville schools. Meghan Keil Murray is on her third visit to do this work from June 28 thru August 3, 2013. She is supported by a grant from The Foundation for World Education (FWE) and her stay is hosted through Aikiyam School. What follows are some excerpts from her blog. Meghan teaches full time at The Battery Park Montessori School in New York City.

June 28, 2013
Today, Friday, I held story time in the Lower kindergarten (Pre-k), 2nd grade and 1st grade. It’s amazing to see children that I worked with in the upper kindergarten class two years ago, now in 2nd standard and to recognize the children who were in the the lower kindergarten, now in 1st standard. After reading aloud to them, “Are you my mother?” the 1st standard class acted out the book and sang songs together.
First Teacher Workshop
There were 20 teachers present for the workshop on teaching and speaking English. After our beginning introductions and interviews we discussed how children are different and how important it is for teachers to get to know children’s individual learning styles. Then I asked the teacher’s to do a reflection on how they learned to speak English. ...one piece that came up a lot was how most of the teachers feel shy about speaking in English in large groups of people. ... Many people had studied English in school but did not find that that was enough- it was the conversation outside of the school that helped the most....

A Rewarding Moment
Bill walked by the 3rd grade classroom where Murugan was teaching Math. Murugan was the teacher who I worked so closely with for the 9 months when I first taught at the school. Out of the window of his classroom I heard him saying to his students in English, “If you can hear me, touch your head. If you can hear me touch your nose.” This is a technique that I often use in my classroom to gain the attention of the children and I realized that Murugan was still doing things in his classroom that either he picked up from me or I picked up from him- but it has been 4 years since we worked together and it made me smile to realize that the time we spent teaching together is still with both of us.

The Halfway Point
And now that I have reached the half way point I know the rest of the trip will go fast- too fast. One thing I am learning is that even if I am gone for a year or two, when I return everyone acts as if it has just been a day, that I am still part of the community, even at a distance.
July 14th Second Workshop:
Documentation of Children and Teacher’s Work in Schools

...there were 28 teachers...everyone spoke Tamil except for the Hindi teacher, Vishal, and myself. The purpose was to have the teachers reflect on what and how children are learning in their classrooms, as well as to reflect on their own teaching, and to discuss how we make that learning visible—through documentation—and one aspect of documentation—Portfolios.

After our reflection time we moved to the video room to watch the video on Portfolios that Heidi Watts made in collaboration with Transition School (the elementary school in Auroville for Aurovillian children). This video is very interesting because they interview students in 3rd and 8th grades about their portfolios and you can really see the children’s thinking and the process with which they put their Portfolios together. This prompted a discussion on what to put into portfolios and how these pieces are selected. We also discussed the purpose of having teacher portfolios.

You can read more of Meghan’s blog by going to http://meghalenindia.wordpress.com/
Auroville Institute of Integral Health Achieves a Fundraising Goal

By B in Auroville

The AVIIH team wants to thank all the USA donors who contributed for the construction of the new building as they have now achieved funding of the building. Construction is at full speed now but the monsoon will be starting and that will slow things down. The timeline for completion of the Institute is summer of 2014.

While funds for the building have been raised, the equipment and interior furnishings are still needed. Linda Grace is in Italy working for that. The health team is deeply grateful for the support to the vital field of health so necessary for the realization of Auroville.

US Ambassador Visits Auroville

The US Ambassador to India, Nancy Powell, visited Auroville on August 10, along with the Chennai Consul General, Jennifer McIntyre and her assistant, Mary Ellen Tsekos-Velez. Ambassador Powell is the first female to hold the highest rank in the Foreign Service as Career Ambassador. As arranged by Jill Navarre, she visited the Matrimandir, the Unity Pavilion, had lunch at Naturellement and toured the boutiques at the Visitor’s Center. While at the Unity Pavilion she viewed the Nakashima Sacred Peace Table and met some of the American Aurovilians there. Jaya showed her the plans for the International Zone and some books were gifted to her along with a letter from the Working Committee to President Obama. It is hoped the relationship continues during her term in New Delhi.
Auroville International Meets in Spain

AVI-Spain hosted members and friends of Auroville Internationals in Tortosa for the annual meeting from May 21 through 26, 2013. There were 9 countries represented by 53 people. Alfonso Galiana organized the location and activities which ranged from seeing Roman Ruins to a boat trip on the Mediterranean where they feasted on Paella Marinara was cooked just for the group.

The Auroville International Board organized an agenda that focused on Auroville youth sharing their thoughts, feelings and ideas for the future. Discussion about the International Zone, Auroville governance and future meetings were held. Presentations too, on Auro Host, an online site for connecting people for short stays when they travel, and a video conference with Dr. Marc Luyckx Ghisi, who served on the Auroville International Advisory Council. A talk by Dr. Vicente Merlo, professor of religious studies at Barcelona University, who guided the group through an integral meditation and spoke on Psychology and Spirituality.

The closing session was facilitated by Helmut Ernst of AVI-Germany. He asked; How to realize the vision of Auroville as a center of unending learning and research? He proposed that universities, scientists, research institutes and students from all over the world be invited to share their own experience in fields that are currently developing in Auroville such as greenwork, sustainable agriculture, architecture and small businesses.

The next Auroville International Meeting will be held in Auroville in February 2014.