



SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT CENTRE



DIGITAL
UNIVERSITY
KERALA

Curating a responsible digital world



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT CENTRE
DIGITAL UNIVERSITY KERALA



Contents

- Introduction
- DACE
- UBA
- NSS
- Integrated Water Source Management in Pothencode Panchayat
- Library and Citizen Service Centre, Basker Nagar
- Digital Literacy campaign -Pothencode Panchayat
- DREAMS- Development of Rural Education and Mentoring Scheme at Pullampara Panchayat
- NSS Camp

INTRODUCTION



An educational institution plays a crucial role in developing the community where the university is situated. Digital University Kerala stands out as a premier institution offering courses in cutting-edge technologies. Apart from the classroom lectures and activities, there are many Centres, clubs, and communities that provide opportunities for students to enhance their skill set and build a good personality for their career and life.

Social Engagement Centre is one of the centres at Digital University that fosters social volunteering and societal understanding among the students and brings developmental initiatives in the communities through student participation. The volunteering opportunities arising from these activities significantly impact students' personal and career development. Such opportunities enable students to build networks, improving their social skills. The Social Engagement Centre (SEC) also serves as a platform for students to immerse themselves in community life and apply their academic learning.

The Social Engagement Centre (SEC) is a comprehensive initiative that combines three distinct programs: DACE(Digital Access for Community Empowerment) UBA(Unnat Bharat Abhiyan), and NSS(National Service Scheme), all aimed at active student participation in promoting community empowerment.





DACE (DIGITAL ACCESS FOR COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT)

Digital Access for Community Empowerment (DACE) is a 3-credit, 300-level University core course for students of all Master's programs at DUK. This is a twelve-day program where the students are expected to get exposed to problems faced by society. This course is offered by the School of Digital Humanities and Liberal Arts (SoDiHLA) of DUK. As part of the course, the students need to identify the issues faced by communities and explore ways to adopt digital technologies to find solutions. The DACE program consists of theoretical content, community fieldwork, and evaluation.

UBA (UNNAT BHARAT ABHIYAN),

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan is a Ministry of Education, Government of India scheme inspired by the vision of transformational change in rural development processes by leveraging knowledge institutions. The Digital University Kerala (DUK) became a participant in the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) initiative in 2022. As a member of UBA, DUK has adopted five villages, namely Athiyannur, Veiloor, Melthonnakkal, Keezhthonnakkal, and Uliyazhathura, located in the Thiruvananthapuram district of Kerala.



NSS (NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME)

The National Service Scheme is a central sector scheme of the Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. It allows young students to participate in various community service activities through volunteering. DUK became the participating institution of NSS in 2022. Since then, the NSS unit of DUK has conducted various activities to promote student volunteerism and get exposure to community lives.

SEC CORE TEAM MEMBERS



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MSc Computer Science
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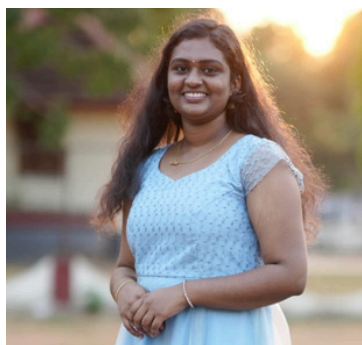
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Rafeeqe
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Specialisation in Data
Science



Anjana
MBA



Ayana,
MBA

ADOPTED VILLAGES BY DIGITAL UNIVERSITY KERALA UNDER UBA

Demographic Details of the Adopted Villages

	Athiyannoor	Keezhonnekkal	Ullizhyathura	Melthonnekkal	Veiloor
Gram Panchayat	Athiyannoor	Pothencode	Sreekaryam	Managalapuram	Managalapuram
Number of Wards	17	18			20(12; 8)
Literacy rate		86.28%	94.9%		
Block	Athiyannoor	Pothencode	Kazhakootam	Pothencode	Pothencode
District	Thiruvananthapuram	Thiruvananthapuram	Thiruvananthapuram	Thiruvananthapuram	Thiruvananthapuram
Lok Sabha/Constituency	Thiruvananthapuram	Attingal	Thiruvananthapuram	Attingal	Attingal
Population		12379	28,230		

ACTIVITIES

Long-Term Activities

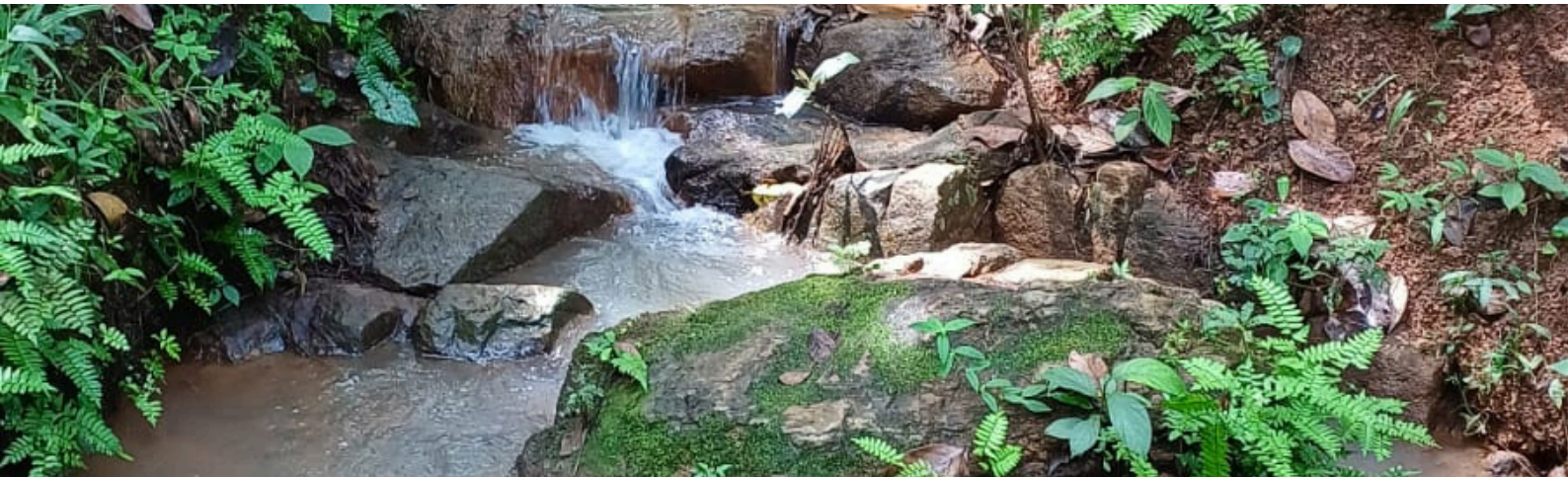
Sustained efforts are crucial for the advancement of sustainable development. During visits to the adopted villages, volunteers identified a range of challenges confronting the community. The strategies implemented to address these issues fall within long-term activities. The Social Engagement Centre is actively engaged in the following ongoing endeavors to contribute to lasting positive change:

- Integrated Water Source Management in Pothencode Panchayat
- Library and Citizen Service Centre, Basker Nagar
- Digital Literacy campaign -Pothencode Panchayat
- DREAMS- Development of Rural Education and Mentoring Scheme at Pullampara Panchayat

Short-Term Activities

Short-term activities include awareness programs for communities in adopted villages and students, workshops, cleaning drives, special day celebrations, etc. All these programmes will be coordinated by the volunteers. Coordinating these activities strengthens the volunteers' leadership qualities and helps them become professionals in their respective fields. The below-described are the short-term activities conducted in the year 2023.

1. Breast Cancer Screening Camp
2. Women's Day Celebration
3. Pothencode Panchayat Cleaning
4. Medical Awareness Talk-screening
5. Village and household survey.
6. Pilot Study, Keezthonnekkal Village
7. Beach Cleaning Drive
8. Medical Awareness Talk- Menstrual Health
9. World Environment Health Day Quiz Competition and Photography Contest
10. World Environment Day Celebration in DUK Campus
11. DUK-Allianz: Empowering Student Volunteers Through Leadership Interaction and Joint Activities



INTEGRATED WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN POTHENCODE PANCHAYAT

Keezthonnakkal village is one of the five villages adopted by the Digital University Kerala. It comes under the Pothencode Panchayat. A visit by the Social Engagement Centre team, including student volunteers, to Keezthonnakkal brought out the case of the unused and improperly maintained waterbodies in the area. The interaction with the panchayat representatives and the community revealed that despite having a number of ponds and streams, water scarcity is the reality of their everyday lives. Water scarcity for domestic use and irrigation purposes appears yearly in administrative reports, and the panchayat has tried various methods to tackle the issue in vain.

In that context, the Social Engagement Centre of DUK identified the need for an integrated approach to sustainable management of the water resources in Pothencode Panchayat. After a few meetings with the Panchayat representatives and community members around the water bodies, the need to find a sustainable solution was strongly felt. Different stakeholders for the successful achievement of the above-mentioned goals were identified, and the possibilities to use the technical know-how and expertise that the Digital University has already possessed were ascertained.

The identified stakeholders included government agencies like Haritha Keralam Mission, Minor Irrigation Department, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Kudumbashree, etc. Pothencode Panchayat has been expected to play the most crucial role as the implementing partner. The Social Engagement Centre in DUK was responsible for acting as a facilitating agent in this project.

After a number of meetings with various stakeholders, the Social Engagement Centre organized a workshop among the exclusive list of stakeholders to take the water body management project to the next level on July 11, 2023. It conclusively defined the project's objectives as increasing the water efficiency of the Panchayat and making it self-sufficient in water

The School of Informatics at DUK-Centre for Geospatial Technology and C. V. Raman Laboratory of Ecological Informatics have started associating with the Social Engagement Centre. These two centers and the School of Electronics have been identified as the potential contributors to the project. The first two centers have successfully completed the first phase of the water resource mapping in the Panchayat using G.I.S. in August 2023. The focus of the phase was the Thettiyar River mapping. A transect walk (Neerthada Nadatham) was conducted through the sides of the water bodies by the Social Engagement Centre volunteers, involving the various stakeholders.

The second phase of the IWRM was waterbody mapping using GIS and drones, conducted in November and December 2023. As part of this project a water quality test and workshop will be organised in the year 2024.





DIGITAL LITERACY CAMPAIGN

“Digital literacy is the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and create information safely and appropriately through digital devices and networked technologies for participation in economic and social life. It includes competencies that are variously referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy, and media literacy.UNESCO”

Digital University Kerala and Pothencode Panchayat jointly initiated the digital literacy campaign in the Panchayat. In the first phase, the campaign focuses on the marginalized communities in the three wards of the Pothencode panchayat: Edathara, Pulimood, and Town Ward. Many individuals lack awareness about digital literacy, making it crucial to educate them on its significance in their daily lives.

How is it done?

The training sessions are planned in such a way that the panchayat will identify the digitally illiterate people, and the student volunteers from the university will train them. The training process includes the following.

- **Awareness of digital literacy and the digital world**
- **Initial Interaction with the Participants** - This will help the student volunteers understand the participants' knowledge level, and they can teach them accordingly.
- **Identifying knowledge gap:** During the interaction with participants, the student volunteers will understand the participants' knowledge level and their interest in learning about digital devices. According to that, the students will train the participants. (the Studnet volunteers can use their smartphones in case the participants do not have one)
- **Evaluation:** A designated evaluation team comprised of student volunteers will be in place. Following the training, evaluators will visit each team to assess the participants' comprehension of the training content.

The beneficiaries of the digital literacy campaign have less knowledge about the pros and cons of digital devices. Also, common citizens lack awareness of digital literacy and its use despite the country's progress in digital technology. With the aim of focusing on the marginalized sections of the population on Gandhi Jayanthi, a digital literacy awareness program was conducted in Pothencode Panchayat in collaboration with the Citizen Digital Foundation. Over 50 individuals participated in this program, the majority of them being women. The Citizen Digital Foundation provided guidance on the precautions necessary while using digital devices, aiming to enhance people's understanding and knowledge.

The panchayat recognized that the MGNREGA groups are marginalized communities in need of digital literacy. The first group started the first training session at Edathara ward on October 12, 2023, in an MGNREGA worksite at the forenoon. There were thirty student volunteers, 40 Beneficiaries, and one representative from the panchayat.

The initial engagement with the beneficiaries revealed that the selected group comprised individuals with smartphone access, those without access, individuals who have never used a smartphone, and those lacking interest in learning about them. One teacher and one student's concept was suitable in this situation. However, few participants chose to be in a team rather than being with one teacher. On the same day, during the afternoon session, an additional team of 35 student volunteers visited another MGNREGA group consisting of thirty-five members in the Pulimood ward. Each group followed the same procedure and took 2 hours to complete the training. At the end of the training session, the evaluating team visited each participant individually and understood their experience. Another training session was organized at the MGNREGA group consisting of 35 members of the Town ward.

In the Palottukonam ward, the group tried a different method, visiting the households to give the training. Twenty-five student volunteers participated and covered forty households with the help of an Asha worker.

Outcome of the project

The project's first phase covered 110 individuals and 40 households. It was observed that group training was more effective than household training. The participants showed more interest while in the group. During the household visit, most refused to spend time with the student volunteers because they were busy with household chores. They felt bashful learning in the presence of their family members. The student volunteers also pointed out their difficulty in household training.



Inauguration of the Digital Literacy Campaign

Prof. Saji Gopinath, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of the Digital University Kerala, inaugurated the Digital Literacy Campaign initiated by the Pothencode Panchayat with the assistance of the Social Engagement Centre, DUK in the presence of the Hon'ble Minister for Food and Civil Supplies Shri G.R. Anil. In a special function in the Pothencode town on the 14th of October 2023, the esteemed Vice-Chancellor pointed out the importance of digital literacy and education and the need to spread awareness on digital technology. He promised the assistance of the Social Engagement Centre and the DUK in such endeavors. Pradeep Kumar, Coordinator of the Social Engagement Centre, explained the plan of action of the Centre in helping the three wards to attain the status of fully literate wards within a certain period.

DREAMS

DEVELOPMENT OF RURAL EDUCATION AND MENTORING SCHEME AT PULLAMPARA PANCHAYAT

The Project DREAMS (Development of Rural Education and Mentoring Scheme), conceptualized by the Pullampara Panchayat and DUK is crafted to empower students to envision ambitious and unique aspirations that help them choose a career path on their own. It is a six-month mentorship program for Government school students in the Pullampara panchayat. The project aims to expose the students, including the students from socially and economically backward communities to various emerging technologies and career possibilities. The program ensures a platform for the students to improve their personalities, build their confidence, teamwork, and personal financial management, develop a scientific temper, and be responsible global citizens.

The project is designed for students of 7th standard to 9th standard and 11th standard and is structured to run from November 2023 through May 2024. Around 25 students hailing from Pullampara Panchayat studying in government schools will be selected in the first phase. The schools and panchayat will do the selection of the students. The students selected for the program will receive mentorship from the faculty members and the student volunteers of the Social Engagement Centre and Innovation Club of DUK.

The project aims to give exposure to fields such as AI and data Analytics, Geospatial Analytics, Ecology and Ecological Informatics, Cybersecurity, Blockchain, Electronics, IoT, and Leadership and personality development. The mentorship program will commence with an orientation covering all the areas that will assist participants in determining their interests. Subsequently, they will be grouped according to their respective interests to solve problems faced by their community. Various workshops and training sessions will be conducted in the areas mentioned earlier. Visits will be arranged to the Maker Village in Kochi, Fablab, and the Kerala Startup Mission in Thiruvananthapuram. The visits will expose participants to different start-up initiatives and their opportunities in the respective fields. Furthermore, the project encourages the students to participate in national-level programs like INSPIRE Awards and national-level competitions in the field of science and technology.

The major component of the program is identifying a social issue and finding a technology-based solution. The workshops and training sessions, along with the mentorship, will enable the students to come up with a solution for the problem identified by them. The students will be provided with a temporary ID card from Digital University. Therefore, they can use the university library facilities.

Goals of the Project

- Expose the students to various emerging digital technologies and possibilities.
- To groom the students to come up with creative solutions to solve society's problems
- Provide an opportunity for personal development and enable the students to become more confident and set ambitious goals in their personal and professional lives.
- To help students understand the significance of teamwork and the importance of personal financial management.
- To make the students responsible citizens and develop a scientific temper

Outcomes of the project

- To enable students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups to reach top-tier institutions with the knowledge and exposure gained through this program.
- To foster a scientific temper, attitude, and mindset among students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups by exposing them to the latest cutting-edge technologies and innovations.
- The students enrolled in this program successfully gain admission to leading national institutions (within NIRF 100) and international educational establishments.
- This project will enable the students to become technological/social entrepreneurs.
- Students participating in this program will be encouraged to avail scholarships such as NTSE, Spell Bee, Science Olympiad, and Maths Olympiad. They will also be motivated to participate in and potentially win nationally relevant innovation competitions.



CITIZEN SERVICE CENTRE AND LIBRARY

Athiyannor is one of the villages adopted by the UBA cell of DUK. The student volunteers identified an unused library building during the visit to the Basker Nagar colony in the Athiyannor village. The volunteers interacted with the panchayat representatives and discussed the scope of setting up a citizen service center and library in the Building. A book donation drive was conducted on the campus to collect the books for the library. During the seven-day camp at the Athiyannor, the NSS volunteers set up the library with the assistance of the Digital University Library. Pfo: Saji Gopinath, Vice Chancellor, Digital University Kerala, dedicated the library to the community on December 30, 2023.



Breast Cancer Screening Camp

DUK Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) Chapter, in collaboration with KIMS Health and Powdikonam Ward, organized a breast cancer awareness and screening program in Powdikonam Ward in Uliyazhathura village on 4th February 2023, from 10.00 AM- 2.30 PM.



Pothencode Cleaning Drive

On 9th of March 2023, a team of 15 students led by Dr. Sreelekha Nair visited Pothencode Panchayat to discuss waste management measures for Pothencode town. The team met with the Panchayat president and ward members to discuss the necessary steps for effective waste management in the town. Later, the team took part in a cleaning drive of the Pothencode KSRTC bus stand and town along with the Haritha Karma Sena of the Panchayat to aware the community about the importance of waste management. The team hopes that this initiative will inspire others to take steps toward effective waste management in their areas.

Beach Cleaning Drive

On March 16th, 2023, the National Service Scheme (NSS) and Unnat Bharat Abhiyan (UBA) of Digital University Kerala organised a beach cleaning drive at Kochuveli beach. The students were provided with adequate safety measures such as gloves and sanitizers. To ensure proper waste management, the waste collected was separated as biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste. At the end of the drive, the waste was handed over to the Thiruvananthapuram Corporation for further processing. The event was coordinated by Abhijith S, Student volunteer, MSc Cyber Security. The event demonstrated the growing sense of social responsibility among DUK volunteers and their dedication to keeping the environment clean. .



Women's Day Celebrations

Unnat Bharath Abhiyan Chapter, along with DUK Innovation Council and Women Cell, has conducted the Women's Day Programme. As a part of the program, a poster designing competition(Online), a women's creativity exhibition, film screening(Movies: Gargi(2022), and Gunjan Saxena: The Kargil Girl (2020)) were organized.



Health Awareness Talk- Women's Health

To commemorate the International Day of Action for Women's Health celebrated worldwide on May 28, the UBA unit of DUK organized a medical awareness talk on women's health on the 25th of May, 2023. Dr. Shabin K. Siddique from KIMSHEALTH Cancer Centre handled the session. The students interacted with the doctor and clarified their queries about their health and well-being.

Blood Donation Camp

The UBA unit and Physical Education Department of DUK jointly organized a blood donation camp on Jun 1, 2023 in collaboration with TEJUS and Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology, Thiruvananthapuram. The program was a huge success, with the participation of more than a hundred people who registered online, of which around 30 people were turned down due to inappropriate hemoglobin levels, medication intake, lack of sleep, and other such reasons.



World Environment Day Celebration

UBA unit and Ecological Informatics lab organised planting young trees in DUK campus as part of the celebration of World Environment Day at 9 am on June 5 2023. This event is expected to contribute to the greening and beautification of the campus. Members of the faculty, staff, and students actively participated in the event. The Honorable Vice Chancellor inaugurated the celebration by planting a tree. Screening of the movie The Elephant Whisperers, the first ever Indian short film that won the Oscar award in the evening.



DUK-Allianz: Empowering Student Volunteers Through Leadership Interaction and Joint Activities

On 30 November 2023, the Social Engagement Centre of DUK conducted a collaborative event at the DUK campus with Allianz Technology, part of @Allianz, one of the major international financial services providers. The event was organized as part of the celebrations of 20 years of operations of Allianz India. Marius Eugler, Chief Technology & Transformation Officer @AllianzTechnology, engaged with the students, providing insights into sustainability, industry, and the relevance of acting today for a better future. Thanooja Sasidharan, Rani Sasikumar and many other Allianz Technology employees joined him during the session. Marius was curious about the various initiatives they lead in the local community on digital literacy for older adults, understanding the root cause of water pollution and trying to reduce it. The aim was to cultivate ideas on sustainability and industry, the social responsibility of the industry and the individual, and collective responsibility towards sustainability among students. The event also contributed to the University's Green Campus Initiative by planting saplings at the university campus. Critically endangered tree saplings were planted based on their suitability to the soil type and climate of the area.

SPARSHAM

A TRANSFORMATIVE SEVEN-DAY NSS CAMP - DIGITAL UNIVERSITY KERALA

Digital University Kerala conducted its first ever NSS camp, “ Sparsham, “ at the Mar Ivanios Bethany Vidyalaya in the Bhaskar Nagar ward of Athiyannoor, one of the five adopted villages of DUK, for a week, 24-30, 2023. Thirty-six DUK students participated in this transformative week-long experience. The camp featured activities aimed at providing social service and helping participants with personality development. The Hon’ble Registrar of DUK, Prof. A. Mujeeb, inaugurated the camp on December 24, 2023, at the Mar Ivanios Bethany Vidyalaya campus. Mr. V.P. Sunil Kumar (Athiyannoor Panchayat President), Mr. Premraj (Ward Member, Bhaskar Nagar), Ms. Sunitha Rani (Vice President, Athiyannoor Block Panchayat) and Mr. Pradeep Kumar K., Programme Officer, DUK also participated in the inaugural function.

The major project during the camp involved establishing a library in the Bhaskar Nagar colony. Volunteers from the Social Engagement Centre have been gathering books from students, faculty, and various organizations with a view to provide the library with the best possible collection of reading material. NSS volunteers organized the books and set up the library with the assistance of the Knowledge Centre, Digital University Kerala.

On 25th December NSS volunteers joined the Bhaskar Nagar Community in celebrating Christmas. School children from Pullampara Panchayat accepted an invitation extended by the NSS Unit of DUK to showcase their talent before the Athiyannoor community. Student artists presented a well-scripted docudrama addressing themes such as waste management, drugs, and the role of youth in the Indian Independence Movement, adding a message of social responsibility to the entire celebration.

Additionally, as part of the "Sneharamam Project,” NSS volunteers cleaned the Anganwadi and the town of Bhaskar Nagar. They conducted household visits to educate residents about the proper methods of diaper disposal. Simultaneously, the volunteers carried out a household survey using the mobile app developed by Digital University Kerala to gain insights into the community. During the survey, the volunteers also conducted a digital literacy campaign to make people aware of the importance of digital literacy.

An indoor session was conducted to reinforce students' leadership skills, communication abilities, and teamwork. Mr. Vinod Damodaran, Founder & Director of Consultise Consulting Solutions Pvt Ltd, an organization specializing in Learning and Development (L&D), Organizational Development (OD) interventions, and Business Consulting, led participants through various activities. These activities included designing superhero posters, engaging in hula hoop games, and enhancing interpersonal and leadership skills. Practical takeaways from the session encompassed adaptability, time management, empathy, and effective communication.

Additionally, volunteers participated in a first aid and fire safety training program conducted by the Department of Fire and Rescue, Neyyattinkara. They also attended a session by the Haritha Keralam Mission on the contribution of youth to a waste-free Kerala. Participants showcased their talent during the specific time dedicated to the purpose in the evenings. There were talented singers and

A campfire was organized on the last evening of their stay on 29th December and was enjoyed by all the participants. On 30th December 2023, marking the conclusion of the seven-day camp, Prof. Saji Gopinath, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Digital University Kerala, officially dedicated the Library to the community. The function took place in the presence of esteemed individuals, including Prof. Satheesh Kumar (Faculty, DUK) and Prof. Pradeep Kumar (NSS Programme Officer, DUK), Mr. Sunil Kumar (Athiyannoor Panchayat President), Mr. Premraj (Ward Member, Bhaskar Nagar), and Dr. Sreelekha Nair (Consultant, SEC)



BEST VOLUNTEER AWARD



Every year, the SEC gives an award to a volunteer to recognize and appreciate their selfless efforts. This award celebrates individuals who have shown exceptional dedication to helping others through volunteer work.

BEST VOLUNTEER 2023



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