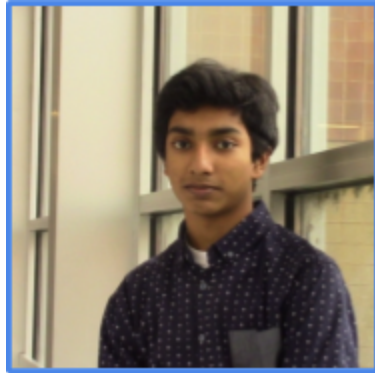


## GRIHITH VARADAY

---



My dad pledges to provide scholarships for the top 5 students in the 12th standard. Hard work pays off.

*“Teaching is a very noble profession that shapes the character, caliber, and future of an individual. If the people remember me as a good teacher, that will be the biggest honour for me.”*

*- A.P.J Abdul Kalam*

Hi! My name is Grihith, I'm 15, and I attend Marquette High School. This summer, I was blessed with the opportunity to give back to the global community and my home country as apart of the NSF APNA Program. Initially, I had not anticipated that I would even spend my summer in India, but as soon as I found out, my family made arrangements to make that experience possible. I would like to thank Ms. Nagaveni Puttaraju for reviewing my application and providing the necessary materials, Raja Uncle and Bharathi Aunty, the St. Louis regional NSF coordinators, for their dedication and support to our local chapter, and encouraging me to pursue this initiative, as well as my grandfather, Satyanadhan Pilla, who made the arrangements with the local school headmaster. This platform wouldn't have been available for me without the help of these individuals.



As a long-time competitor in the NSF Spelling Bee's and three-time state finalist at the State level for the Scripps National Spelling Bee, I decided to conduct a spelling bee workshop for the students in the ninth standard at CMR GVMC High School in Vishakapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India. Because I was only staying in Vizag for 1 week, I wanted to make the best use of the students time and teach them something meaningful.

When I walked into the school for the first time, it was almost as if a culture shock had hit me. Of course, I had been expecting a different environment from the United States schools, but I was intimidated by the mere number of students in each classroom intimidated me. I was dressed very casually, wearing khaki shorts, a T-shirt, and while all the students wore proper school uniform and stood up in unison as soon as I entered the classroom.



“Good afternoon sir!” the boys on the left and the girls on the right exclaimed.

I was taken aback by the respect they were showing for me, as they kept standing until I looked up from the presentation I was downloading on my computer and Chandu, who I would find to be the class topper asked “can we sit down sir?”.

“Please be seated” I said shyly.

As I would find out, the school had only recently transitioned into a English-medium curriculum, so most of the students could write at a proficient level, but struggled with spoken English. It was at this moment that I decided to diverge the path of instruction, because teaching spelling techniques, roots, and conducting a bee would not have been practical under the circumstances. Because I only had one hour per day, I decided to split the class times up into three portions. For the first 20 minutes, we would cover vocabulary and pronunciation, for the next 20, we would do sentence structure and grammar, and for the last 20 minutes, we would do GK, general knowledge in a quiz

---

bowl style. Topics covered included math, geography, history, sciences, and the arts. Over the course of five days, the students who I was initially intimidated by became my *family*. We had great discussions about professions, aspirations, food, movies, etc (and joked around as well: “who looks better: Shah Rukh Khan or Prabhas?!” the girls asked) . In the beginning, we spoke primarily in Telugu, but step-by-step, we progressed until each of the sixty student was confident in their English. I myself also struggled a bit in my communication in Telugu, so teaching truly helped improve my fluency in Telugu. Writing on a chalkboard was very difficult at first, as I would break the piece every five minutes, but I eventually got the hang of it! It is for this reason that I highly recommend the APNA program to all-not only will you be doing a feel-good service to the society, you will also learn along with the students.







On the last day, I handed out chocolates and certificates of achievement for all their hard work. I was touched by the students enthusiasm and commitment to keep trying to speak the language, even when they knew were stumbling. On the first day, I had seen many of the kids playing badminton in the school recess ground with simply cardboard planks and a paper ball. I decided to buy some sports equipment for the school: cricket bats, shuttlecocks and racquets, soccer balls, ring toss, and chess boards. Seeing the happiness on the kids' faces when I walked into the classroom on the final day with that kit cannot be described. Without a doubt, I will continue to volunteer my time as an APNA Ambassador, as well as visit CMR GVMC High School again. I truly hope I inspired all the students to pursue their dreams. There was a significant improvement in everyone's English. I will look to help the next grade levels establish their foundation and confidence within the English-medium so they can compete for NSF scholarship opportunities in the near future. Many of them also aspire to come to the United States and study, and I want to ensure that it is a possibility for them.

**Thanks to CMR GVMC High School for this experience!**



**Pictured :**

**Above with school English teacher**

**Below with school interim-Headmaster**

