

MY APNA EXPERIENCE

By Aman Shaik

Malala Yousafzai once stated, "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world." It is said that once you teach someone a concept you tend to learn the concept better. My robotics journey started when I was a 3rd grader. I have loved building Legos as a child but watching my Legos come to life was astounding. I started to get involved in multiple robotics Lego league teams-the program is called FLL (First Lego League). Each robotic season we had a new robot with a new name and built it depending on the certain theme. After all those many years of building robots with Legos it was time to move on to more complex robots. When I became a 7th grader, I began to build robots out of metal pieces. This program was called FTC (First Tech Challenge). Last year my brother competed in FLL for the first time. He competed in the Florida State FLL Championship. This summer it was my transitioning year into being a freshman in high school. I volunteered at the Museum of Science and History in Jacksonville, Florida showcasing these Lego robots. The babies were baffled when they saw these objects driving on the floor. I realized it was time to teach robotics in underprivileged areas.

India, a developing country, is a beautiful place. It's a place like no other. For someone traveling there every year since a toddler it's a place you can't miss. I decided to serve as a youth ambassador for the North South Foundation's APNA program. My mom is from Hyderabad, so I decided to volunteer at the Vidyaniketan School. I remember walking into the classroom and everyone standing upright as if they were soldiers and stated, "Good morning brother!". I found this very surprising since they were relatively the same age as me. I first began teaching 8th graders the robotics workshop. The first day they built the robots and found it fun. The boys and girls were split into separate groups and the girls built the robots faster due to their organization and cooperation. The boys group had some commotion because they were deeply engaged. The next day we programmed the robots using the software on the computers I had brought. One thing that stood out to me was the pride they showed when they finished. It was such a great thing to see. The boys and girls individually showed the principal their robot and how it moved. Word about the workshop grew quick. The 9th graders (my age) saw the robots and wanted to participate. They individually talked to the academic director and stated that they wanted to experience this workshop. They were given the chance and I did the same workshop for the 9th graders. The 9th graders were very funny and much more energetic. They were very interactive. They asked me if I knew Hindi and Urdu. It was a big deal for them to see someone their age but from a different country. I made some great friends. I was basically a celebrity. They asked if I wanted water or a chair. They were formal. I felt

great that I had helped some kids that did not have the learning experiences I had as a child.

Overall, involving myself in the NSF APNA program was a great program to be involved. I made new friends overseas and made an impact on over 50 kids the same age as me. What I did was a simple thing anyone can do. Anyone can change someone's life for good. Just like Malala said, "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world." Thank You NSF!

-Aman Shaik



8th grade girls showing pride in building their first robot ever!



First day of 8th grade workshop!



9th grade girls showing pride in building their first robot ever!



Curious minds learning about the functions of a robot!



Making new friends overseas through robotics!



Programming robots to move!



8th grade boys showing pride in building their first robot ever!



9th grade boys showing pride in building their first robot ever!