

BighelpforEducationPost-InternshipReport

By: Sana Shaik

Date: July 1-2, 2014

My name is Sana Shaik and I am an incoming 9th grader at the Franklin High School, MA. This past summer, I visited Hyderabad, India. During my trip, I became the first Bighelp Youth Ambassador, meaning that this was my second time interning on behalf of Bighelp. I interned at the Vijayapuri South Government High school in Nagarjuna Sagar. This school is where my father studied when he was in grades 6-10th. This essay provides some background about the school and describes my experience as an intern.

Day 1

Through my 14 years of making friends, one event stands above the rest as my absolute best friend making experiences. Through it I learned so much about teaching, learning and dealing with friends. A friend is someone who gives you total freedom to be yourself. This is exactly what I felt when I walked into the ninth grade English medium class at the Vijayapuri South Government High school. The school is an average Indian school that has around 10 classrooms, 370 students and a 1:25 teacher to student ratio. It is located in sunny Nagarjuna Sagar, the village where my father was born and grew up. The village is known for its dam, which has 26 gates, making it a very beautiful scenic spot. I stayed in Sagar with my cousins and their families.

This was my second time doing an internship at the same school, I had come to this school two years back, when I was in sixth grade and had conducted a science experiment and coloring contest with the students. Meaning this time I would be classified as a Youth Ambassador. This year I conducted a little more complicated science experiment along with a workshop about environmental awareness. As a usual teen would be, I was a little nervous at the start, but as soon as I saw the big grins and little smiles of every student in the classroom everything disappeared. I saw a few familiar faces and many new ones, but what I saw the most, were the friends that I could make of all of them. After the principal, or as they call him, the headmaster of the school had introduced me to the class; he told me that they were all mine. I proceeded to introduce myself and talk about where I am from and what organization I came on behalf of. They knew what Bighelp was, so I told them mostly about what the internship program on behalf of Bighelp was. I also mentioned that I wanted everyone to be my friend and that there were no differences between us. Many of the kids understood what I said as soon as they heard it, but just for clarification I repeated it again in Telugu.

The kids then told me all of their names and helped me pronounce them if I needed the extra help, marking that as the first moment, in the few minutes that we had started class, the teaching learning process! We then started to talk about India and USA and how we are different, but also similar in many more ways than we could think of. We first talked about the foods we eat, and as a typical American would have been judged to have been eating, they asked me "Do you not get bored with the burgers and pizzas you have every day?", I smiled at them and said "No I don't, because I follow the same food habits as my parents do, who usually eat rice, curry, vegetables and a variety of meats." Then we talked about the holidays, I told them how we usually have parties on Diwali, Sankranti and Ramadan Eid. They asked me "Don't you get cold from the snow when you wear such short clothes?", I smiled at them again and said "No, because as an Indian, I wear Indian kurtis, salwar kameez and langa vonis, plus

the weather is not always cold, and there are a few days when people wear shorts and shirts.” The kids asked “Then why is everyone always drinking at the parties?”, I told them that “It’s just a myth and not EVERYONE drinks at the parties”, the questions continued as we all got closer to each other and started to understand that we were all the same, but had our own unique qualities.

After they asked me all of their questions, I said that I also have a few questions for you and I asked them what they thought friendship was and who their best friends were. Everyone had fun when talking about this, because the class clown, Sandeep would jokingly say “Hey!

No! He is my best friend!” or “Oh My Gosh! I thought I was your best friend!” and make everyone laugh. By that time, the school bell rang for lunch and surprisingly it had already been 3 hours and 45 minutes since I had introduced myself. The lunch break for the students started at 12:45 and ended at 1:45. I headed home along with my family members to have my lunch, while a few kids went home and some stayed at school to eat.

Following the lunch break, at around 2 PM, we started the Science experiment workshop and talked about volcanoes, one of the students that I met two years back, Johnny, told me that “Volcano” in Telugu is “Agneeparvatham”. I asked the students 4 main questions:

Who knows what a volcano is?

How are volcanoes formed?

What are the different stages of volcanoes?

How many volcanoes are there in the world?

I got multiple answers and all of them were correct. I elaborated on some of the answers, but some of the answers were so accurate that I didn’t even need to explain further.

Eventually, when all the questions and answers were over, I split the kids up into groups of 5(co-ed) and gave them 3 boxes of play dough, 2 spoons of baking soda, 1 spoon of food coloring and 2 spoons of vinegar. I showed the groups how to make the shape of a volcano and then told them to do the same. Following that, the kids mixed the vinegar and the food coloring together. Then I told them to put the baking soda into the volcano and add the vinegar mixture to that. They all “wowed” at the scene of the sodium bicarbonate and acetic acid forming carbonic acid and escaping the solution. When I asked the kids “What’s happening”, they gave me an answer that was clear, but I elaborate just a little bit more for their clarification. The school bell then rung again at 4 and I was again surprised by how quickly the time flew by. This activity ended Day 1 of my Youth Internship workshop on behalf of Bighelp for Education. I was so happy that everyone had become my friend and was even happier to have had made everyone’s day exciting with the activity. The kids showed so much more improvement from the last time I had come, and I was sure that my youth ambassador experience was always going to be an event that I cherished.



(Top: From the left Rani, Manjusha, Vamsi, NagaBabu, Subash and Kamal)
(Bottom: Ganesh, Sandeep, Sunitha, Santhipriya and Nagababu's Volcano Exploding)



Day 2

The second day of my internship was one that I was both excited and sad to go to. This was the last day that I would be conducting a workshop with my friends in the ninth grade English medium class, but this was also the day where I would be opening the new mineral water tank for the school and awarding a few kids for their extraordinary talent that they showed in the classroom.

The ceremony started at 9 with the grand entrance of two other donors alongside me, the school band played and the NCC (National Cadet Corps) group welcomed each of us with a salute, then the headmaster of the school gave each one of us flowers. I was so thrilled at the site of the whole school watching me and I felt somewhat like a celebrity. We then all saluted to the flag, sang the national anthem and another brave volunteer sang the patriotic song "Hum Honge Kamyab". We were then asked to say a few words by the teachers. I gave a speech about how welcomed I felt in this school and why I was here. I also spoke about Bighelp and gave them a brief understanding of what the organization does. I then continued to address 4 students, Johnny, Vaishnavi, Ganesh and Taj Uddin as the four exceptional students I had chosen to be awarded. I gave them water bottles and journals.



(The NCC group getting ready to start the ceremony)

Following the speeches, each one of the donors was asked to put a garland on the statues of freedom fighters that were in the school grounds. Then we continued onto the ribbon cutting for the water plant and then planted a tree in the playing grounds of the school.



(Me, as I pour flowers on the head of a statue)

After the ceremony was over, I was reunited with my friends in ninth grade and we spoke about environmental awareness. The kids knew so much about what to do and what not to do, but when I asked them “Do you actually use these tips that you are coming up with?” the answer was “No”. I then explained to them that just saying things will not make a difference, but making the changes will. One thought that the kids had been “We should reduce pollution and keep the air clean”. I agreed with them and asked what happens when there is pollution in the air? They couldn’t really explain thoroughly, to clear their doubts, I did a demonstration. I started off with

showing them one pretty and one ugly paper flowers and I said “I put one in an area where there are a lot of trees. And another I put one where there are no trees. Who can tell me which flower was put into the place where there were no trees?” I got the answer I wanted, the ugly flower. To further explain, I told them we are flowers too, we breathe oxygen just like they do, and if we are in a polluted area, then our health will become worse just like this flower. All the kids understood and promised to do at least one thing to help the environment. That is when the school bell rang and it was lunch time. The day had been going exactly as I had planned.

During the lunch break I went home, had my lunch and instead of heading back to the high school, I went to the Bighelp elementary school that my father studied in when he was a kid. There I told them that they should always continue their studies and become great people. I also handed out candy and gave kids their new uniforms and books. I then went back to the High School and we planted a tree, and assigned everyone a responsibility in taking care of both the trees that were planted that day. I also handed out mini notebooks to 6 students, who I thought were the most creative during the making of the volcanoes.



(Planting a Tree with the Kids)

This marked the ending of my Bighelp Youth Ambassador Internship. I learned so many things, such as always being happy, because I realized how much the students looked up to me and also that I have the power to make a child, Taj Uddin, so comfortable with me, that he had the courage to come up and ask for the help of Bighelp, because his family was in need of aid. Many children love education and grow a passion for their studies. Bighelp's role in educating children is something that any kid would love when they are in a poor state. I felt the most effect I had was on the children's attitude towards learning new and interactive ways of studies, such as the activities I conducted along with them.

(All of the girls and I showing off our #Swag)

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Finally I would like to thank my parents, my grandparents, my aunts, uncles and cousins for supporting me throughout my internship. I would also like to specially thank the teachers and students of the school for letting me conduct the activities and the headmaster for giving me permission to. I also could not have made this event so memorable, without the help of Anitha and Rekha aunty (Bihelp Youth Coordinators) and Chand Pasha Shaik (Bihelp Founder and President); they supported and guided me along the right path until I finished my internship.