

## **BigHelp for Education Post-Internship Report**

**By: Shreyas Chaturvedula**

**Date: July 10-11, 2019**

This summer, I participated in the BigHelp Youth Internship Program. I visited the Nidadavole Government High School in Nidadavole, Andhra Pradesh, where I was given the opportunity to interact with a class of 45 students who were studying the tenth grade. The school was entirely Telugu medium, and therefore, I spoke in Telugu for the duration of the internship, to make it easier for the students to understand. My reason for choosing this school was the history that my family has with it. My grandmother, on my mom's side of the family, was actually part of the first 10th grade graduating class. Similarly, many other relatives from my mom's side of the family attended or worked at this school. By doing my internship here, it was almost as if I was giving back to the school on behalf of my family.

The day before the internship, my family and I were driving through the town of Nidadavole and we decided to stop by and make a brief appearance at the school. We spoke with the headmaster and he took us to the 10th grade classroom that I would be interacting with. He gave a brief introduction about who I was and what I would be doing over the course of the next two days. I then introduced myself to the class and told them that I'd be back tomorrow and the day after to spend time with them. In the few minutes that I was in the class, I noticed that some of the kids were laughing and not really paying attention. I was doubtful about whether or not the whole program would play out smoothly.

As soon as I walked into the classroom on the first official day of the internship, I was greeted warmly by the students. The boys and girls sat separately but they all welcomed me in unison, addressing me as "Anna", or "brother", in Telugu, and the jitters I had from the day before almost melted away. I introduced myself again and began my introduction.

Before starting, however, I asked the students for a small favor. I asked them to view me not as some foreigner, but as one of their friends, and that way, the interaction between us all would go much more smoothly. Right away, we got into a conversation, and began discussing a multitude of topics including schools, sports, seasons, food, and holidays. The students were particularly surprised by the difference in value of the US Dollar and the Indian Rupee, and were also fascinated by time zones as well. Soon, the conversation took course on its own and topics ranged from movies all the way to the Cricket World Cup, which was taking place at the time.

When we took a break for lunch, I noticed that all the children received free meals. I stayed with the students as they ate lunch and walked around. They were allowed to roam around in the school grounds during the lunch break. One student came up to me, still holding his plate of food, and asked if he could give me a quick tour of their school grounds. When I said yes, he immediately was overtaken with joy and he dumped out the contents of his plate on the spot. He ran to go wash his hands and came back quickly. I was very astonished at this, and realized at that moment that these kids held me to a very high standard. The student showed me the cooking area, where the lunch was freshly prepared every day. He also showed me the garden where the produce used in the lunch was grown. He showed me their digital classroom, or DCR, and their virtual classroom, or VCR. The DCR was what they called their computer room, which we have in my school as well. The VCR, however, was something I had never seen before. It was a room with a normal projector but it was used to project lessons from other schools as they were being taught. This way all the schools could follow a steady curriculum. Not only during this tour but throughout the internship, I noticed that the kids felt overjoyed just if I acknowledged them or even waved. Some kids shook my hand and then ran to go tell their friends. These children who I had never seen before were treating me like a celebrity.

When we returned from the lunch break, the kids asked what subjects interested me in school. I told them that I really enjoy math and science, but also really love sports as well. I then showed them how I combine both my interests into a single subject, anatomy of the body. I showed them a demonstration on how muscles in our body work and how they are used everyday, not only to play sports, but to perform daily activities. After showing the demonstration, I had the students do a similar activity which showed how the muscles in our hand and wrist work. For the activity, the students traced their hand on a piece of cardstock and cut it out. They then attached a piece of string from the tip of the finger to the base of the palm. They did this to each finger and had all strings come together at the base of the palm. Then by pulling each string, they could see how each finger is affected due to a certain movement, and how the movement of one finger affects the movement of another. The students compared the model to their real hands and were able to see the similarities. After they had completed the activity, I gave the students a six-question quiz about that day's lesson. Once the students finished the quiz, we all went outside to the assembly stage and concluded the day with the Indian national anthem.

I walked into the classroom the second day and was greeted immediately with a lot of energy. Right away, they started asking questions about yesterday's activities and what the results of the test were. Many students said they went home and shared the activity with their families. I had corrected the tests the night before and was astonished to see that out of 45 students, only one kid got a perfect score. I passed out the tests to the students and called up the kid who got the perfect score. His name was Trinadh. One thing that struck me about this kid was his down-to-earth appearance and his background, which I later found out. Physically, he was the shortest kid in the whole class, and he sat in the middle row. He was very polite and didn't speak much. Later, when I was talking to the headmaster of the school, he explained to me Trinadh's situation at home. Trinadh didn't have parents and he lived with his grandmother. The headmaster explained that he wasn't very booksmart, but was clever and street-smart. He told us that as soon as school

ended, the boy would work in a sweet stall until 9pm, and that if he didn't bring home at least 35 rupees(50 US cents) per night, that he wouldn't have a meal waiting for him at home. This story really touched me and opened my eyes about the conditions that these students live in.

After we finished reviewing the tests, we went outside to perform a science experiment. We placed Mentos inside various kinds of sodas and observed how much of the soda exploded out of the bottle. Following the experiment, we went inside again and I explained the rules of American Football. After I finished explaining, we went outside and threw the footballs around. The boys and girls both played separately but looked like they were still having a blast. I joined in with both games and saw the enjoyment in their faces. This showed me that despite the terrible conditions that each of them faced, they were able to have fun and enjoy themselves with what they had. After playing football for an hour, the students taught me games that they like to play, such as kabaddi and throwball. Once we finished playing, the students asked me more questions and another conversation started up. One kid asked if he could sing a song, and what happened next blew my mind. He began singing, and one by one, everyone in the class joined him. This showed me the connection and brotherhood that existed between all the students. After they sang the song, we went to the podium and presented the bags that were provided by BigHelp to the students. Once the bag presentation was over, all the kids came up to me to bid farewell one last time. Many of the kids were teary-eyed, and I could really feel that I connected with them over the past two days. As soon as I left, it struck me that I wouldn't see these kids again and I started to understand the emotions that they felt. Even now, I wish that I could have seen them one last time.

Taking part in this internship program showed me that our outward appearance doesn't determine who we are and that we can be satisfied with what we have. This internship really grounded me, and showed me how privileged I am to be living in the

US. The incident during the lunch break made me wonder, “If a simple wave of my hand made such a big impact on a group of people, how much larger of an impact could I make if I used that same hand to physically help other people? After spending time with the kids, I realized that though I come from a different background than them, from a financial standpoint, we are all still the same. The memories I made doing this internship will last forever and I’m truly honored to have had a chance to take part in it. A huge thank you to Chand Uncle and the BigHelp organization for giving me this opportunity, and to my mentors, Akhila and Padma Aunty, for guiding me through the process. This internship was truly an unforgettable experience and given the chance, I would do it all over again.





## NIDADAVOLE 10th GRADE CLASS





## MUSCLE DEMONSTRATION





## KIDS ACTIVITY



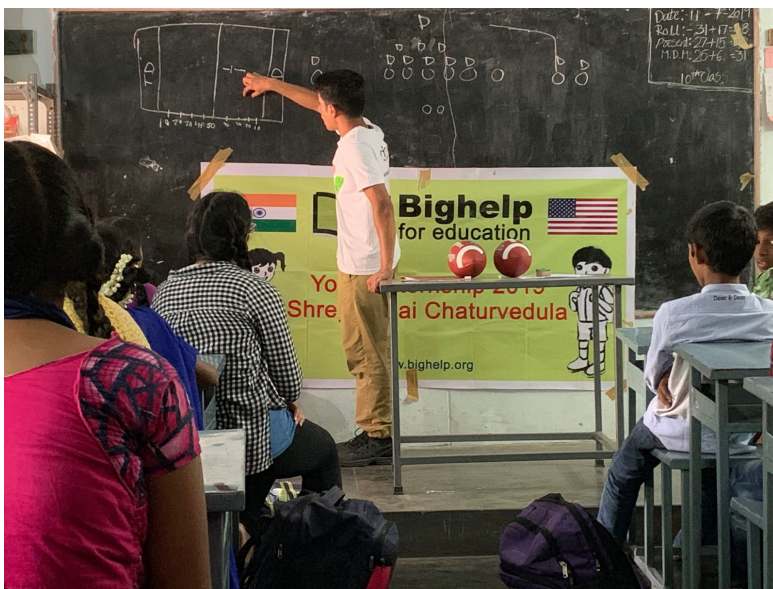


## COKE AND MENTOS





## FOOTBALL





## BAG PRESENTATION

