

## **Alekhya Gunturi, NSF Youth Ambassador**

A few summers ago, I went to visit my grandparents who live in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh. I noticed that my parents, grand parents, and relatives spoke English with an Indian accent. I tried to correct their pronunciation, although it was tough to change an accent acquired over a life time. It occurred to me that helping Indian students learn the correct English pronunciation and spelling of words early on in school, just like I learned in the US, might solve this issue. I expressed this idea, my interest in teaching English pronunciation to any interested kids, to my grandparents. This summer, an opportunity to do that came by my way, when the Head Mistress of Sri Sai Krishna High School (SKHS), in Srikakulam, was willing to offer me a chance to teach English pronunciation and spelling to students for a few days.

My awareness and association with North South Foundation APNA program immensely helped me to accomplish the above dream. Through the APNA program I was able to volunteer to help aspiring children at SKHS, and organize a 4 day workshop in English pronunciation and spelling. We approached and obtained guidance from Mr. Venkat Gade from the NSF-APNA program. He helped us by pointing us the right direction and providing the right materials to use.

The ages of the students varied at SKHS, but most of them were from sixth to ninth grade. They were very eager to learn, and it was an honor to be able to teach them. They participated in the class without fail, and were sure to shout out the answers or read along with me. At first, I was a bit perplexed as to how I was going to create a lesson plan that incorporated the material given by NSF-APNA that was easily understood by the students. For a few weeks, I went through the material and developed a lesson plan to use. When I reached Srikakulam and started teaching, I realized that I would have to make some minor changes to the lesson plan in order for the students to understand.

The workshop started out with a small inaugural function, organized by the school. Some invited speakers were the executive members of the Rotary Club: Sri N. Hari Satyanarayana, Sri V. Rajulu, Sri B. Sudhakar, and Sri Jaganmohana Rao, who spoke about the importance of the English language in the everyday world. The headmistress mentioned the fact that the school was very lucky to have me come from the US and teach, instead of enjoying my vacation. I explained to the students what the NSF-APNA program was and the workshop goals for the upcoming days. The local press, invited by the school, published an article about the APNA workshop.

Over the next couple of days, I taught the students a few important parts of the English language. Some of the topics that I covered were prefixes, suffixes, Greek and Latin roots,

pronunciation, and the meanings of words. Homework was given out on a daily basis, whether it was to review the lesson or complete a worksheet. Students were able to come to me with any questions, but everything had to be spoken and asked in English. On the last day, a spelling bee was conducted. The students were asked twenty words from the list that I had given them earlier, and five words were asked from a different list that I had prepared, so it would pose a challenge. The students did fairly well on the test, although I could've given them easier words to spell. For each of the top three scoring students, Sri N. Appanna garu, the chief correspondent of the school, handed out dictionaries, which I had donated, to encourage the students to study pronunciation, spellings and meanings of English words. The rest of the students were given pens.

There were many people there that helped make this workshop possible. First and foremost, I would like to thank Mr. Venkat Gade from the NSF-APNA program, who allowed me to be their ambassador. Second, I would like to thank Mr. G. S. Rama Rao, my grandfather and retired principal of the Srikakulam Government Degree College, for communicating to me about the NSF-APNA and arranging this workshop with Sri Sai Krishna High School. Third, I would like to thank the principal of the school, Smt. Pushpa Reddy, and the members of the Rotary Club, for giving me the chance to contribute something to the SKHS and encouraging me throughout. Lastly, I would like to thank the children of the Sri Sai Krishna High School for being so eager to learn. Seeing the bright, excited smiles that I was able to put on your faces is a sight that I will never forget. This workshop was definitely an experience of a lifetime that I'm glad I didn't miss.

