

Aurora student starts charity to get Indian kids into schools



By Brock Weir

Having come to Canada with his family from their native India at the age of two, Parth Agarwal knows the privileges that often come with being Canadian.

That being said, he also understands not everybody can be in as comfortable a position as he is. The difference, however, is he has set out to do something to address the inequity.

The 17-year-old Aurora student is the driving force behind the iParth Charity Foundation, which hopes to bring on fundraising through individuals and Canadian businesses to support vocational training for students in Rajasthan, India.

"My dad recently started a honey business, so he went back to Rajasthan and saw children in poverty," he says. "When he told me about this, it really struck me. I have been to India a lot of times and I never really saw children like that. That is when I thought I could do something about it."

This desire was driven home the next time he travelled back to the country with his family. With his father's message in mind, he kept his eye out for the plight of the street children and the images stick with him to this day.

"There were kids who were serving tea to people, working in stalls, and there were lots of kids just sitting on the side of the road," he recalls. "There were a lot of child beggars."

Making inroads on his path to help, he made connections with charities working on the ground in Rajasthan and it is through iParth he hopes to raise money to keep these groups running, get the kids off the streets, and into schools to learn trades.

"I really felt I should help these people," says the St. Andrew's College student. "I really felt they deserve the knowledge I am getting at this school. They deserve the same kind of education. Our main focus is towards this education. We have one charity we are working with right now and the money we give them goes towards the overall running of this charity because their main focus is education as well. They take children off the streets, bring them in, give them vocational training, and they are training them for jobs while giving them food, healthcare and a place to stay."

Although iParth is still in its incubation stage right now, he says he hopes to have things up and running on their website as early as next week. Right now, the website provides information on the charity as well as contact information if anyone would like to get in touch to help.

If one cannot provide any financial donations to help, what is equally important, he says, is spreading awareness, not just about the

charity, but also of awareness in general that ?there are children out there who aren't getting the rights they deserve.?

?We're still preparing, and maybe a little bit further down the road we will be connecting with more charities and maybe expanding to different countries and continents,? he says. ?I am really thinking about South America and Southwest Asia.

?Being humble is really something they teach us at this school and to appreciate the fact of what we are getting. The stuff we get here is a privilege, not a right. There are a lot of kids out there that don't get this, so that has really opened up my eyes to this problem. The next time I go to India, I want to visit the charity itself and see how things are going there.?

At school, Parth is president of SAC's Robotics Club and a member of the Writing and Publication Council. Maintaining a 93 per cent average, he hopes to follow his passion for engineering in his post-secondary education.

For more information on the charity, visit www.iparth.org.