



CAUSE

A teenager is actively trying to make computer-related education accessible to students of government schools. WOW! finds out more

Bridging the Digital Divide

In April 2021, 16-year-old Zara Xavier, took over the Know More School (KMS) campaign that her parents – Sabina and Xavier Augustin started in 2015. She explains, “Initially, I wanted to help out by making a couple of minor changes to the organization. However, after getting involved, I was moved by the work and wanted to make a difference. That is when I took it over and made some drastic changes.”

The main motivation behind KMS is the digital divide. In a city like Hyderabad (and many other places), there is a group of privileged individuals who have all these opportunities and access to electronics and the digital world. Meanwhile, there are others who will never learn the use of a laptop or even have access to one. Due to this lack of exposure, they are losing out on a world of opportunities, that could help improve their livelihood.

Zara explains, “With the growing digital divide, I wanted to do something to help solve the issue by giving students

the opportunity to improve their digital literacy. KMS was the perfect opportunity for me to do so. We install computer labs in schools for underprivileged children, run coding camps, and currently have four in Hyderabad, which have impacted over 13,000 students.” Today, she runs the labs at four schools in the city: Mastan Nagar Government School, Roch Memorial High School, St Alphonsus High School and New Bloom High School.

Apart from volunteering at schools and teaching at the camps, Zara also does a lot of the behind-the-scenes managerial work. “I installed our fourth lab and learned a lot about budgeting and finances, and my people skills have also developed, working with lab instructors and seeing who to hire. Apart from the practical skills I have developed, working with these students, I had the opportunity to see what they’re like, and how hardworking they are. This is one of the biggest sources of motivation for me,” she notes.

Currently pursuing her IB Diploma Program at the International School of Hyderabad (ISH), managing school and time for the initiative is a big challenge. She adds, “I try my best to juggle both. I have people I work with for KMS, so if I am busy during exam week, for example, I can count on them to have my back. However, I make it a point to visit the labs every tendays or so to make sure everything is running smoothly. With regards to school, I will finish my allotted work for the day and do a little KMS catch-up or planning every day, to make sure we are making some progress.”

Zara’s parents are the brains behind the Heal a Child Foundation which helps sick children from underprivileged communities. And her inspiration comes from home. “From a young age I have been exposed to this and the idea of giving back is engrained in me. They have inspired me to work hard and make a positive impact on others,” she concludes with a smile. ■ MALLIK