





# Board Member Talk

## IN CONVERSATION WITH Ms. VASAVI MANDAVILLI, WE STRIVE BOARD MEMBER

Interviewed by: Isha Kannan and Vahin

Compiled by Suhaas Madasu

**Ms. Vasavi, a critical board member of We Strive club joined the organization in 2019 and has made a significant impact since then. She stood up her Public Speaking and Debate club in 2020 which became a phenomenal success during COVID time. Ms. Vasavi successfully ran eight clubs (both in-person and virtual) so far and mentored elementary, middle, and high school students. Another feather in the cap was the Summer Showcase that she led. It was attended by then Mayor TJ Cawley, Liz Johnson, and Steve Rao. All the students got an opportunity to display their talent in front of Morrisville Town's esteemed community leaders. In conversation with Horizon newsletter club students, Ms. Vasavi candidly shares her journey with**

### **When did you join We Strive?**

I joined We Strive in late 2019.

### **What made you join We Strive?**

I joined We Strive because I connected well with Mr. Suresh Vellanki's (Founder) vision, which was to empower our youth and teach them life skills outside the school and help them become successful in life and create an impact in the community that they live and eventually bigger impact beyond the community.

We are growing towards enabling our youth to consider community service impact and other things beyond what is taught in the school. That is something I connected with, and wanted to contribute whatever I can to aid the vision.

### **What impact do you feel you made through We Strive?**

For the major part, my involvement with We Strive has been through the Public speaking and Debate clubs, geared towards elementary, middle school and high school children. We have run these clubs since the beginning of 2020, and we have done several classes. This program has significantly impacted youth in a positive way. Children who were nervous to talk publicly or on stage were mentored and given a platform to express their thoughts, overcome their stage fear, and be able to communicate with other kids and other adults publicly and not just that, but also expanded their thinking to read and then confidently speak about that. I think this program has been impactful in making children very confident and be successful with their school presentations.

### **In your opinion, how do you think We Strive impacted our community?**

I think we Strive has had a huge impact on our community, at various levels because we introduce programs that are academically enriching, service oriented and help the kids learn several skills beyond academics.

With respect to giving back to the community, We Strive played a significant role, be it helping the underprivileged or helping develop leadership skills in the youth. The unique aspect of We Strive is that a lot of clubs are student-led and the Board of Directors, or the other adult leaders are there to just enable the youth. We have seen results of that,

kids coming out of the organization having gone through several personality development and character-building clubs gained confidence. The leadership that they have shown in the community and what they are going to achieve later in life, it will stay with them for a long time and hopefully shape them to also be more responsible adults who give back to their community. So, I think the impact has been huge right now and will continue to be that way over the years as you guys grow up and go out into the world and help spread the same type of collaborative work.

**Are there any other clubs led by you that we can share with our readers?**

Apart from public speaking and supporting other youth leaders and volunteers, which is the main task, I have also led/contributed to the Summer Bash, the Annual event

**What challenges did you face as you stood up these clubs?**

Initially, I thought it was great. There was a lot of good turnout. The challenge for any of our volunteers who do this in their own time is to be able to find enough time amongst their other work and responsibilities. To be able to find the time and do a good job at it has always been a challenge. The second one being as the semesters or years went by, it has become harder to get the kids to attend in a disciplined way. Especially, sticking to the timelines has been one challenge recently.

**Are there any upcoming classes?**

I do not have a definite answer right now, but we are planning to have something finalized soon.

**What is the experience overall from We Strive so far?**

Only positive, I am inspired constantly by the number of things that the kids do. It is so inspiring because it can get tiring during the weekend and every time, I see what is possible and read the success stories of We Strive kids who participate in activities in addition to the stress and work from their schools, house and community is extremely inspiring. It keeps me positive and energized. I feel that there is so much that can be done, a huge potential to do things if we set our mind to it.

**What is your vision for We Strive?**

My vision from we strive is huge. I know we have done a lot at the local scale at the community level and I know with time that we start making more inroads into really helping underprivileged, which is one of the core visions of these drive is all of all of you guys kids, the adults, the family if you will that they really make a huge impact, um, you know, at a, at a community level state level, national level and ultimately global level. Right? I do see that as a possibility and with all hard work in time that it will happen, so I am excited to be part of that work.



# A TRIP TO THE NC ZOO

In this article, Vahin Ganji (fourth grader) shares his experience as he visits the animals in the NC Zoo.

The NC Zoo is a magnificent place to be! There are more than 1,700 animals to explore and learn about. The NC Zoo has different regions, and each region has animals that live there.

## My Experience through the Zoo

The whole 4th grade went to the NC Zoo. There were three classes. I was in Ms. Goldsmith's class. We were split into groups with our best friends. I got picked with my five best friends.

Each group had a tour guide or chaperone to guide them through the Zoo. We decided to cover the East African region because it had Lions, Elephants, and Giraffes. First, we went to the Chimps. They were tired. Then we visited the Lions. They were so big I realized why they were called "The King of The Jungle". They also had a huge \*mane.

Then we went to the West section of the African region. We first went to the Elephants. They were grazing on some grass far away so my friend, Ethan, bought out his binoculars. Each Elephant had an amazing name. Then we went to a new region, North America.

We went into the aquarium and saw amazing North American fish. We took a loop from there and went inside a desert cave and saw birds, snakes, tarantulas, and much more!

Our final animal was the Ocelot. We were surprised by its amazing spots and how they stood out from its tan coat. We looked at the time and we only had 5 minutes left! We quickly strolled through the alligators and came back to the whole 4th-grade group. We then went back to school on the charter bus as we watched movies and had lots of fun on the way back. Then I went on the bus home.

\*Mane- A thick coat of fur around a lion's head/neck.

# MEMORABLE 'MOM'ENTS

ON OCCASION OF MOTHER'S DAY, WE STRIVE STUDENTS SHARE THEIR MEMORABLE MOMENTS AND MEMORIES WITH THEIR MOMS.

"Mothers are like glue. Even when you can't see them, they are holding the family together." - Susan Gale.

Pretty funny right, because not many people realize it. Try one regular school morning without your mother, and all I can say is, "Good Luck!" because it is not very easy. Yes, I know they can be a pain in your neck sometimes, but at the end of the day it is all for your own good, just like Bern Williams said, "Sooner or later we all quote our mothers" which is true because the first person I saw as I open my eyes is my mother. Since that day, my mother has given me unconditional love, no matter what happens, even on the rough road. If I had the chance to keep on talking about how I loved my mother, trust me, I would but that could not be described in words. A person that would take away their life for yours, a mother, a wife, a daughter, a sister, are all things that my mother is and so much more. May 14 isn't the only day that we appreciate our mothers. I can tell you from personal experience, it is every day for 24 hours, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. I can't imagine my life without my mother, because as I said, I love her too much :)....

Happy Mother's Day!!! - Isha Kannan

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I would like to honor my mother on this Mother's Day by sharing one of her memories, instead of mine. If I recall properly, my mother told me

about my poor pronunciation of certain sentences at a young age. According to her, whenever my father and her praised my older brother about getting good grades in school, I would feel immense jealousy. As a result, I would say something that sounded like, "Wotabotame." It took my mother around a year to figure out that I was truly saying, "What about me?" Though I don't remember this occurring, I am glad my mom told me about it. Now I have something to always laugh at. Happy Mother's Day to all the lovely moms! - Medha Talluri

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I Love my mom. Personally, I think she is an important person for our family, and we couldn't live without her. One memory which I am sharing with you today is, happened when I was 11 months old. I stole my grandpa's crackers, and I ate them next to my mom when she was sleeping. I love that memory so much and I think it is funny. I hope my mom enjoys it too.

Happy Mother's Day to all moms - Tanmayee Nistala

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# COMIC STRIP

COMIC STRIP ILLUSTRATED BY VAHIN GANJI

