



Exemplary Student Service Award Nomination – Aryaman Sharma

Nominated by Kelsey Johnson, Coach at West Fargo Sheyenne High School, ND

It is rare to find a student like Aryaman Sharma. As a determined leader and driven change-maker, Aryaman has already begun to leave an indelible mark on those around him. He is philanthropic with a strong moral compass. However, I'm most impressed with his altruism and motivation at such a young age.

Aryaman uses his voice to advocate and serve those in need. On a trip to India to visit his grandparents, he saw numerous indigent children unable to get a basic education because they needed to watch siblings or work in fields. Aryaman has never taken his education for granted in the United States, and he recognizes that education leads to social mobility and individual growth. Therefore, he started his own scholarship program and nonprofit organization called beyondBASIK (Bus As School for Indigent Kids). Aryaman uses his communication and advocacy skills honed through speech and debate activities to collaborate with community activists in Gurgaon, India, to secure donations, recruit retired teachers, and draft basic literacy and numeracy curriculum for students. Then, at home in West Fargo, North Dakota, Aryaman partnered with Sheyenne High School to collect items like school supplies and clothing for students being educated in his converted school busses. As the leader of an overseas organization, Aryaman also successfully communicates with others to ensure the curriculum written in English is translated to correct Hindi. To date, beyondBASIK has operated for two years and increased attendance from 40 to over 100 students.

Aryaman also serves his local community and peers. He uses his talents to help those less fortunate than him. He is a dedicated student council member who is spearheading the "Spread the Word to End the Word" campaign against using the "R-word." Through this campaign, which will occur in March, he will be raising awareness about the impact words have on people in order to encourage a more inclusive culture at Sheyenne High. Aryaman doesn't just encourage people to change their word choice, he also leads by example. Aryaman's passion for athletics, communication, and volunteerism led him to coaching for the local Special Olympics. As a coach, he effectively articulates rules, plays, and directions to his athletes of varying abilities. To date, he has worked with 75 athletes.

Furthermore, Aryaman is a humble and patient team captain and leader for the speech and debate teams. As a young competitor, he did well in his rounds and soon realized his love for public policy, economics, and political science. The skills he's learned in speech and debate will undoubtedly be used for the betterment of others as he transitions to the next chapter of his life. I've watched in awe as he teaches underclassmen and middle school students the process of Public Forum and Congressional Debate. He is inclusive and patient with teammates of all abilities and backgrounds with the sole purpose of making them better competitors and more confident speakers.

Aryaman exemplifies the NSDA Code of Honor, and he fundamentally believes in empowering and serving others.