

VidyaGyan: Giving wings to rural aspirations

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SITAPUR

Nancy Kulshreshtra talks in fluent English as she confidently tells you that she wants to be a civil servant when she grows up. The young girl who has just attended the Duke TIP programme shares her experience of being in complete English-speaking environment. For those who know that she comes from a nondescript village in Jalaun and is the daughter of farmer can well imagine the flight that she has taken from the small village that she started out with.

VidyaGyan, India's first rural leadership Academy set up by the Shiv Nadar Foundation in Sitapur and Bulandshahr, has given wings to rural aspirations by providing them an environment where they get the best opportunities as any other urban child.

The Shiv Nadar Foundation on Tuesday announced the completion of five years of VidyaGyan, India's first rural leadership academy. Set up in Uttar Pradesh, VidyaGyan in Bulandshahr completed five years, while its younger sibling, VidyaGyan, Sitapur, completed three years. The occasion witnessed the presence of the trustee, Shiv Nadar Foundation, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, who along with the students interacted with 'The Pioneer.'

The 1,400 students studying



Students of VidyaGyan interacting with mediapersons in the presence of Shiv Nadar Foundation trustees

Pioneer

at the VidyaGyan, Sitapur, and VidyaGyan, Bulandshahr, have come a long, long way. This is evident from the manner in which Anupam Mishra from the same school, who has also attended the Duke TIP programme and wants to become an IIT engineer, talks about the strengths and weaknesses of his urban counterparts. "They can speak English but I found that I can tackle difficult mathematical problems much better than them," he said. He said that when he would grow up he

would like to spread education in his village since most of the people were not inclined towards education.

The trustee, Roshni Nadar Malhotra, says that they have focused on the concept of the leadership programme which did not stick to the conventional meaning of leadership. "We are focusing on leadership by first providing them good education and at the same time giving them exposure when they come in contact with other schools dur-

ing the several competitions organised in the NCR region. By making them carry out community services we keep the rural connect alive because it is important that they do not forget their roots," she said. Roshni said that with this concept of leadership she had seen that most of the rural children who come with the idea of tangible aspirations switch their dreams to what they aspire most.

She said that they felt assured that they had taken the right way

when the first batch of VidyaGyan students from Bulandshahr gave their Class X boards this year. They had 96 students securing 95 per cent marks and above and 66 students securing between 85 per cent and 95 per cent marks.

Roshni shared the several success stories which the other students had made. "They are going places with two students, Gul Sannwar Ali and Sakshi Mdhar, selected for an exchange programme with the Brown University. Mehul Kumar from Class 11 has been selected for an exchange programme with Lee High University and Manvi Chaudhari has been selected for a youth exchange programme in the USA where she has been adopted by a US family," she said.

"We are also seeing leaders emerging in fields with one of our students qualifying for the third edition of Doha Goals Gathering of All Leaders in Sport Forum and four other students winning the PUMA School of Speed Award, India's first national school-level athletics meet," she added. Admitting that the journey was exciting, difficult and trying, she said that they were planning to make extensions within the existing campuses. "Currently we have 1,400 students in these two campuses with 100 teachers wherein we are keeping the student and teacher ratio at 14:1 which is much better than the urban schools. We will increase

the strength in the coming five years. We have covered all districts of Uttar Pradesh and we plan to expand the existing campuses," she added.

"Today, we conduct one of the largest private selection and admission processes in India covering all the 75 districts of UP. In 2014, we evaluated 200,000 students for the admission exams and 300 were inducted in VidyaGyan," she said.

The students made their rural connect alive by carrying out community works in the villages. Prashant Singh, a student of VidyaGyan, Sitapur, who has done a workshop on forensic sciences, lately said that he would like to create a scientific temperament in his village and make them use fertilisers and manure.

After setting up the first VidyaGyan School in Bulandshahr in 2009, the Foundation established the second campus at Sitapur in 2011. Spread over a sprawling 27 acres, the Sitapur campus has 30 classrooms which include multiple language and science labs and state-of-the-art indoor and outdoor sports facilities. With over 800 students currently from eastern and central UP, the VidyaGyan, Sitapur, in full capacity will accommodate over 2,000 students. Kiran Nadar, trustee, Shiv Nadar Foundation and Chairperson, Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, was also present on the occasion.