Good morning to all the respected teachers and the delegates of NESA.

My name is Sahithi Vuppula, and I am an eighth grade student from the American International School of Kuwait. I am Canadian of Indian origin.

To begin with, I would like to humbly thank my parents, my brother Saketh, my teachers, especially Ms. Lyndsey Cox, my sixth grade teacher, and Ms. Kit Whitney, my Middle School Counselor, who both offered support and encouragement.

And NESA for granting me the opportunity to stand before you all and speak.

When I was a child, I grew up in Canada, where I was presented with the basic needs of life.

I would often help my mother solicit donations for organizations such as The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, and the Canadian Diabetes Association.

But I had no real idea what community service truly meant.

As a young child I was under the impression that the world was a small and sheltered place, where everyone was as well off as I was, and that everyone had the same opportunities that I was presented with.

It wasn’t until my first trip to India that I realized that my notion of how small and perfect the world was completely changed.

I saw children worked hard and were not presented with the same opportunities I was presented with.

A desire soon grew to try and help the people I saw. I asked my father what I could do to make a difference, and he told me that good things come in small packages, and that any heartfelt service to people, no matter how small the contribution, could help make the world a better place, one step at a time.

When I think about service, a quote by Mahatma Gandhi comes to my mind: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.” My personal interpretation of the quote is that selflessly and happily devoting oneself to aid others will allow an individual to not only understand oneself, but better oneself as well.

I have also involved myself in various community service projects around the school and in Kuwait. I have volunteered with the Kuwait Association for Care of Children in Hospitals
(KACCH) in play groups to help little children overcome some of the stress that comes from being in the hospital. Also I have volunteered to campaign against bullying in my school and supported myself along the way as well as my co-students who were victims of bullying.

I realize though, that I am still a young girl. However, soon, I will have to face various problems that the world is faced with now, and I have to be ready to face those challenges. Being of service to others in many ways prepares me for facing those challenges as well as assists others in need.

Finally, thank you Mr. Thorburn and GBG/TieCare for generously funding the Stanley Haas/Luke Hansen Award, and thank you to Dr. Hansen and the committee members from NESA for the honor of being this year’s recipient. I will do my best day-by-day to make this world a better place.

Thank you.

Sahithi Vuppula