

Hardik does it from the heart

Mulund youth Hardik Mehta devotes a lot of his time and effort to teach spoken English to the under-privileged

PADMA SINHA

SOME things in life go beyond just profit and loss. Businessman Hardik Mehta realises this. In an age, where volunteer work is only a past-time taken up during college years, Mulund youth Hardik has gone on to make his volunteer work of teaching spoken English to under-privileged youngsters a labour of love. An applicant for the Apeejay India Volunteer Awards to be announced next month, Hardik has been working with children from vernacular medium schools for the last three years.

The ABC

Like any other youth, he too could have gone on to get busy with his family business of manufacturing fasteners, content to work only for himself. But Hardik wanted to make a difference.

"I completed my graduation in the commerce stream from the Ratna College of Arts, Science and Commerce and then did a diploma in business finance from Hyderabad. Then I went on to pursue a masters degree in commerce from Mumbai University", says Hardik.

An idea struck him during his graduation. He smiles, "When I started studying for my graduation, I realised that a lot of my friends from the vernacular medium faced difficulty in understanding the lessons. It was then that I decided to contribute my bit to change the scenario."

The journey begins

Not only has Hardik been associated with the Kotak Education Foundation for the past three years

as a volunteer for their Spoken English programme, on Sundays, he also conducts interactive sessions with students who find English difficult.

He explains, "Not everybody can afford expensive education in English medium schools. Thus, most students study in vernacular medium schools where spoken English is not a priority. So I thought that I must focus in helping such students," he says.

Hardik especially loves to work with children. He says, "Children learn faster, and it is fun teaching them. I just give them the freedom to express themselves. I just make sure that they speak correctly, and improvise on their language. Things are easier and simple since children have the willingness to learn."

Talking about his teaching method, he elaborates, "I ask the students to call customer care executives on the phone and talk to them. Conversations are the best way to learn, as no one interrupts you while doing so."

Truly an inspiration

Recently, Hardik also helped a group of grade eight students from Kamad Vidy Mandir to improve their English Speaking skills. Sometimes his efforts include even funding the education of some children, whose parents cannot afford it. And although the government or other authorities offer no helping hand, the reward is the work itself. And of course a successful student. Hardik strays, "I have the conviction to offer genuine help to the children; so all these problems do not bother me much." Some of his



students have managed to complete their High Secondary Certificate (HSC) exam, says the proud teacher.

"I've been fortunate to get the support of my parents and siblings who have encouraged him to take up more of such good ventures," he says.

Needless to say, Hardik is an inspiration to many in the society.



INSPIRING OTHERS: Hardik Mehta at work with his students