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# The Start of Swathi's Olympic Dream

by R. Swathi HOINA Student

My name is R. Swathi, and I am 17 years old. I was born in a small village located on the outskirts of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. When I was four years old, my father passed away in a tractor accident, leaving my mother, my three-month-old sister, and myself. My mother struggled to feed us every day. She only had a fifth-grade education. She worked at a local factory breaking down beer bottles to be recycled. She worked all day only to make 1,800 rupees (\$26) per month.

We had been living with my grandfather (on my father's side) as is customary in Indian culture. Six months had passed when my mother approached him asking him to help put me in an Englishmedium school. Although she was struggling to feed us and herself, education was so important to her. My grandfather lashed out at her and yelled, "You don't even make enough to feed your family, what do you expect to do with 1,800 rupees per month?! Get out of my house!!" He forced us to leave right then, sending my mother out alone with us at 9:30 at night. We left with the clothes on our backs, no food in our stomachs, crying and walking through the village together, unsure where to go, or how to get there, since no cars or buses were running at this time. I was only four at the time, yet that image is glued in my mind.



Swathi with her medals from a recent state competition.

Eventually, we got connected to HOINA, and my mom joined me here when I was eight years old. I felt like I finally found a home. I felt like coming to HOINA was having a second birth. When I stayed at my grandma's home, I used to cry every day but when I came to HOINA the tears dried up and were replaced with laughter and smiles. Mom is the best thing I have ever seen because before I came here I never saw this kind of love. What I wasn't able to receive in my home, I received at HOINA.

It was the PT Teacher at Jindal School, the Englishmedium school HOINA enrolled me in, who saw that

# **Olympic Dream**

I competed in school athletics with a different kind of enthusiasm than all the other students. When I was in 6<sup>th</sup> class I used to practice with the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. I would beat the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders in almost every athletic activity. I went to State Level meets every year from 7<sup>th</sup> grade till now.

I just graduated my plus two (equivalent to High School grade 12) and will go to a University this year. My dream is to participate in the Olympics and get a gold medal. I love running and feel like running is both a dedication and a sacrifice. Since I was a small child something hit my brain telling me I need to be in the Olympics. Ever since, I can't let go of that goal and desire. Olympics is my dream. It's what keeps me waking up at the crack of dawn for practice, and keeps me training when all of my friends are spending their time elsewhere. It's what keeps me going to balance my studies and my time.

It's my dream to participate in the 100m dash in the Olympics. Right now my 100m time is 12.56 seconds. The last gold medalist took home the gold for 10.90.

I know if I keep training I can reach my goal. Right now I train seven days a week, twice a day, except for Sunday evening. I am dedicated to getting a good education; the type of education my mom always dreamed of me having, and achieving my dreams of representing my country in the Olympics someday.



Article in Andhra Jyothi Telugu newspaper (Visakhapatnam city edition) about the achievements in sports by HOINA students R. Swathi and K. Venkata Narayana Rao. Translation appears below:

### KVN RAO (top right)

- Participation in all India inter University Athletics meet held in Punjab 100 meters and 200 meters
- Participation in all India Athletics meet held at Guntur, Andhra Pradesh 200 meters, 4x100 relay
- Medals in state level Athletics Championship meet held at Nellore, Andhra Pradesh Gold medal in 4x100 relay, Silver metal in 200 meters
- Medals in Inter college games held in Vizianagaram Silver medals in 100 meters, 200 meters
- Medal in Inter college Athletics Championship meet held at Eluru, Andhra Pradesh 4x100 relay gold
- Medals in Inter College Games held at Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh 4x100 relay gold metal, 200
  meters Silver and 100 meters bronze medal

#### R. SWATHI (bottom left)

- Participation in South Zone National Athletics meet held at Kerala 100 meters, 200 meters and Medley relay
- Medals in State level Athletics meet held at Guntur, Andhra Pradesh Gold medal in 100 meters, Silver medal in 200 meters
- Medals in Inter district junior athletics meet held at Eluru, Andhra Pradesh Gold medal in 100 meters, Silver medal in 200 meters, Silver medal in medley relay

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## Loss in Life for Two Brothers





The first of our two brothers featured this month is Kanugula Sai Ram, who just turned 11 on June 2. He joined HOINA last summer, and we are still awaiting a sponsor for him and his brother. Sai Ram likes the color red, and he hopes to be a police officer someday. Since his favorite animal is a lion, perhaps he has the courage to do just that when he grows up. Sai Ram's brother Dileep, will be nine years old on August 19<sup>th</sup>. His favorite color is blue, and he likes to play volleyball. He favors his brother's ideas for future plans. He, too, would like to serve on a police force in India.

Mr. Chandra Mouli and Mrs. Hemalatha Kanugula got married on February 23, 2003. Our boys' father was an electrician by trade, but he was also an alcoholic. The couple were blessed with their two boys. Unfortunately, both husband and wife argued daily over Mr. Kanugula's drinking. In May of 2016, Mr. Kanugula asked his mother for 100 rupees for alcohol. When she refused him, her son told her that if she wouldn't give him any money, he would commit suicide. Again, his mother said there was no money. Thus, Mr. Kanugula hung himself that very day. After his death his widow was unable to care for their two sons, because she had no parents. She attempted suicide by taking pills, but she was taken to the hospital and survived. From that time on Mrs. Kanugula's health was not good. She approached a nurse in Kothavalasa for help. The nurse is member of the Baptist church in Kothavalasa and was aware of HOINA. After hearing the family's story, our staff admitted Sai Ram and Dileep.

These calm boys always have a ready smile for those they meet. After an already-difficult life, they are ready for the joy that HOINA affords. Won't you please help us help them or other children like them? Please send your first monthly gift of \$35 with the coupon on the back page. Return it to our office, and you will hear from our volunteers in Pennsylvania soon. God bless your generosity!

## **Newspaper Translation** (cont.)

- Participation in National Junior Athletics meet held at Guntur, Andhra Pradesh 100 meters, 200 meters and medley relay
- Medals in School Games Federation Athletics Meet held at Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh Silver medal in 200 meters, Silver medal in 4x100 relay
- Participation in National School Games Federation Athletics meet held at Haryana 200 meters and 4x100 relay
- Participation State level youth men and women athletics meet held at Nellore, Andhra Pradesh 100 meters, 200 meters [Editor correction: Gold medals taken in both events]
- Participation in Indian Speed Star selections at Cattack, Odissa

HOINA is a 501(c)3, tax-exempt organization with international headquarters located at:

HOINA PO Box 87 Saint Charles, MO 63302-0087 U.S.A. This newsletter is published to inform our readers of the work HOINA does among the handicapped and abandoned in India.

Send address changes to: HOINA PO Box 636,

Edited by Letti L. Becker Layout by Eberly Designs Printing by Prestige Color

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**Mom in India** 

By the time you read this, HOINA President Darlene Large should be back in India. Prayers are appreciated for her safety, health, and successful interviews for new staff.

The official registration and financial information of Homes of the Indian Nation (HOINA) may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling, 1.717.787.1057. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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Thank you to the many donors who chose to give memorial and honorary gifts from January through June 2018. When requesting a gift to be listed in someone's memory or honor, please include the name and address of the individual or family so we can send them an acknowledgment.

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Horace Backus Letti Becker Richard Curry Darlene Large (2) Marcia Liberto

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