

# V'wada duo bags award in NASA rover challenge

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
@ Vijayawada

A duo from Vijayawada, Sai Akshara Vemuri and Akarsh Chittineni, along with their team won an award under the Social Media Category in the Human Exploration Rover Challenge (HERC) 2023 from NASA, USA. Director for NASA's Space, Time, Energy and Mass (STEM) Engagement Southeast Region Kevin McGhaw presented the award to the team in the under-19 category on April 22.

On reaching India, AP Non-Resident Telugu Society (APNRTS) president Venkat S Medapati and CEO P Hemalatha Rani felicitated Akshara and Akarsh at their office in Tadepalli on Wednesday.

The students thanked the president, CEO and other officials of APNRTS for supporting them to conduct STEM engagement sessions as a part of their challenge for more than 5,000 students studying in government schools in the State to create awareness on space tech.

The rover challenge was conducted in April 2023 at the NASA Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. The six-member team, including Akshara and Akarsh from Vijaya-



NASA's space rover contest social media winners Akarsh and Akshara during a press conference at APNRTS office in Tadepalli on Wednesday | PRASANT MADUGULA

wada, Om Padhi, Basudeba Bhoi, Akankshya Das from Odisha and Siddhanth from Mumbai, competed with 61 teams, including students from 45 colleges and universities, and 16 high schools, from 30 countries.

The social media award recognised the team's exceptional communication skills and ef-

forts to involve and educate the public on STEM activities. The team utilised social media platforms to share their progress with NASA and engage with a wider audience.

While Akshara has finished Class XII, Akarsh has completed Class X. Sharing her experience, Akshara said, "We are

very glad to have won the NASA award. I was a student safety officer of our team. We had participated in the challenge under the high school division. After forming a team, we sent a proposal of our rover design to NASA. After getting an approval, we manufactured the rover at Young Tinker Educational Foundation in Bhubaneswar with the help of our mentors Anil Pradhan, Vaishali Sharma Pradhan."

Elaborating, Akarsh said, "I was the technical lead of our team. Akshara and I also got the opportunity to give a talk at TEDx Naperville in Chicago along with our team, where we shared our experiences of building the rover. We had also designed a multi-purpose tool to collect liquid samples from lunar and martian surfaces."

APNRTS president lauded the duo for hoisting the Indian Flag at NASA Marshall Space Flight Center and said they are planning to conduct a programme where students can interact with the young space scientists.

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# NASA recognition for two AP students

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Vijayawada: India under-19 team won the social media category award at the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge (HERC) which took place at the US Space & Rocket Centre in Huntsville, Alabama in April. The competition featured 61 teams from 30 countries. The programme brought a unique recognition to two young students of Andhra Pradesh origin.

The award recognised the team's exceptional communication skills and efforts to involve and educate the public about STEM activities. The team utilised social media platforms to share their progress with NASA and engage with a wider audience to inspire the next generation. Out of the six members of the team, two students were from Andhra Pradesh.

Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society on Wednesday felicitated the AP students Sai Akshara Vemuri



Sai Akshara Vemuri, Akarsh Chittineni

and Akarsh Chittineni at their office in Mangalagiri.

Sai Akshara Vemuri finished her 12th grade and was Student Safety Officer in the NASA HERC 2023. She is a mental sports athlete and accomplished three world records by reciting the highest decimal places of root 2 value. Akshara won many science competitions at the district, state, and national levels. She also developed an app for AP Red Cross to meet urgent blood needs.

Akarsh Chittineni, a 10th grader from Vijayawada was the technical lead of the NASA HERC Rover Challenge 2023 team. He is a school topper and a national badminton player.

## Space science enthusiasts bring laurels to Vijayawada

The Hindu Bureau  
VIJAYAWADA

Two youngsters from Vijayawada have brought laurels to Andhra Pradesh with their success at the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge (HERC)-2023 competition held in Alabama, U.S.A. between April 20 and 22.

Sai Akshara Vemuri, who has just passed the 12<sup>th</sup> standard from Delhi Public School, and Chittineni Akarsh, a 10<sup>th</sup> standard student of KCP Siddhartha School in the city, were part of the six-member team from India that won the Social Media Award. The team was selected for the challenge by Young Tinker Foundation.

The duo was felicitated by Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society (APNRTS) president and Adviser to the government



NASA's space rover contest winners Sai Akshara Vemuri and Chittineni Akarsh being felicitated at the APNRTS office at Tadepalli on Wednesday. K.V.S. GIRI

Medapati S. Venkat and CEO P. Hemalatha Rao at the APNRTS office at Tadepalli on May 3 (Wednesday).

Mr. Venkat said that the APNRTS had helped the students visit government schools, interact with students and conduct the necessary research work for

the rover made by the team.

The APNRTS also provided an opportunity for the students to witness the PSLV launch at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) at Sriharikota, in association with the Children Space Club.

Ms. Akshara said that

**Sai Akshara Vemuri and Chittineni Akarsh were a part of the six-member team that won the NASA Human Exploration Rover Challenge -2023 competition held in Alabama, U.S.A.**

their team had sent the rover's design proposal to NASA first and they were asked to prepare a model. "Initially, we designed a 3D model and then built the rover in Bhubaneswar," she said.

The rover made by the team is capable of traversing on a simulated Martian and Lunar terrain. Ms. Akshara was the Student Safety Officer while Mr. Akarsh was the Technical Lead of the team.

the technology and create research units. "On receiving informa- Railway Act.