

# Vijay Arunjunai

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Tata Consultancy Services Volunteer, goIT



As Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) signature community engagement program in North America for the last 10 years, goIT helps students design human-centered solutions that harness technologies for innovation. This digital innovation program blends design thinking and industry expertise to provide students with the 21st century skills necessary to create technology for social good.

Through a standards-aligned engaging curriculum, students are introduced to the innovation lifecycle, product prototyping, and industry relevant entrepreneurial skills. The program ends with a high energy, idea-pitching culmination event. TCS employees serve as role models during the program by mentoring students, providing industry context and real-world connections.

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## Community Building

Vijay Arunjunai has mentored students through 12 events in Louisville, KY. A STEM leader himself, Arunjunai knows the impact of community building and mentorship. “Finding opportunities to expose students to STEM, not just through a career day or speaker event, but with real mentors solving real challenges in their community is how we will build future talent pipelines. This work is critical, and being a mentor in a program like this allows me to use my own expertise and experience for good in a community that matters to me, creating new opportunities for particularly underrepresented students who may have not traditionally seen themselves in STEM careers. It’s a powerful opportunity.”



## The Program

As a volunteer mentor for students in the goIT program, Arunjunai works to help counsel students through their programming and development. From supporting them from creating their bug lists in the community to advising their prototypes and presentations, he knows that the presence of a real-world business leader can make all the difference for students understanding the applicability of their work. “I’m so excited with the way the program has grown over the years and continues to evolve and grow. We have a chance to really build the talent pipeline with talented and invested students who can’t wait to do this work and impact their communities. They see that opportunity through this program.”

Arunjunai is also excited for the opportunities that virtual learning brings. “The shift to a virtual world happened quickly and being able to respond agilely has been key. While there have been some serious challenges with this, I think it’s also creating so many new opportunities. Maybe mentors don’t only have to work in their local communities anymore. We can reach so many more students this way and have that much more impact. I love that we’re on the forefront doing this work and making these changes.”

# The Results

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Arunjunai saw the most impact when a couple of his student teams won the competition. “I got to meet their families and see the excitement and the gratitude from them. You realize these opportunities do not just impact the students themselves, but also their families and their communities. That is a game-changer for me and brings me so much joy to see. It also helps inspire more business leaders to mentor and do this work because they can see the value it brings you yourself. I felt so much pride in those students and the work they did. It was great to be part of it and to support it.”

# The Future

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With the shortfall of prepared STEM talent for the current and future workforce, encouraging students from all backgrounds to be excited about and pursue STEM opportunities is critical. Arunjunai believes that programs like goIT can help build talent pipelines with the kind of community-building empathy required to be successful in those roles. “The more we can expose kids to the programs and analytics and real-world issues they will one day face, the more prepared they will be to take on those roles. Bringing this work to kids in elementary and middle school helps them become job-ready and will impact the community while making it better for tomorrow. It’s social impact and a social revolution that we are bringing into the schools themselves.”



# Final Thoughts

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“The role of the private sector in supporting K-12 STEM learning is huge. Even if it’s not just with goIT, schools and businesses all around the country need to be making these partnerships and building these opportunities for real-world STEM learning and engagement. It helps grow the community while also building business. When you want to run your business, you need to make sure the community is sustainable. The workforce has the knowledge they can bring to the table, and without community support, you will lose jobs. You will lose business. The basic purpose of business is to make communities happy. You can help doing this by supporting the community and being an active player in the development of its future workforce. Plus the more you engage in the community through volunteer programs, the more engaged your employees are. This is critical for any business as they think about their own growth and sustainability.”

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goIT brings the many disciplines of IT into the classrooms of students traditionally underrepresented in STEM careers. The curriculum shows students how to use the agile methodology for rapid prototyping and implementation to design technology that bring positive change to their community.

Although primarily targeted at middle school aged learners, with minor adjustments, the program can easily reach all learners from K-12.

With a proven curriculum since 2009, goIT has impacted more than 25,000+ students in metropolitan and rural communities across North America. By leveraging the train-the-trainer model and emphasizing a modular approach, goIT meets educators, schools, nonprofits, and community organizations where they’re at.

To learn more about goIT and watch their new 10th anniversary program video, check out [www.TCSEmpowers.org/goIT10](http://www.TCSEmpowers.org/goIT10)

**STEMconnector**