

# Karthik Sundaram:

## *I like to think I've helped a little*

**K**arthik Sundaram is a Renaissance man. He plays violin and piano and has performed in Vienna with the Duke Chapel Choir ([www.chapel.duke.edu/choir](http://www.chapel.duke.edu/choir)). He is an athlete – partial to swimming, tennis and crew – and a philanthropist, most recently spearheading a campaign with his sister to purchase books for orphaned children in India.

He is also a scholar, despite the fact that he never attended college.

Well, at least he hasn't yet. At 14, Karthik is still busy mastering ninth grade.

Sundaram's resume is astounding for someone twice his age, reflecting his prodigious talents and training in vocal performance. He's an alumnus of St. Thomas Choir School in Manhattan ([www.choirschool.org](http://www.choirschool.org)) and the youngest-ever member of the famed Duke Choir.

One doesn't have to talk to him long, however, to learn that this modest young man has a heart even bigger than his magnificent voice.

Staff members at the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health were deeply moved recently when they received a letter from Karthik and his

mother, Cheri Sundaram, after Karthik performed with the Choir School at UNC's Memorial Hall.

Karthik wanted to return his part of the choir's honorarium to UNC, his mother explained. As they talked about where the donation could be put to the best use,

Karthik kept in mind that his dad (Dr. Senthil Sundaram, a Raleigh, N.C., cardiologist) is a 2000 alumnus of UNC's Public Health Leadership Program.

"Karthik continues to hear about all the great things accomplished by the school of public health from his father and colleagues," Cheri Sundaram wrote, and he concluded that he wanted the School to be beneficiary of his \$125 gift.

Karthik has traveled several times with his family (including sister Arya, 11) to Sivasailam, in the state of Tamilnadu, India, where the family takes on numerous projects to benefit children in a local orphanage.

"I've seen people my age who are very poor and who need a lot of help to be healthy and happy," he says. "They don't have money or parents to watch out for them. The kind of work my dad's school does can really make a difference in their lives, so I like to think I've helped a little by sharing the honorarium." ■



Karthik Sundaram

*He has traveled extensively and seen situations in person most teens have never seen or may have only discussed in the abstract.*

– Cheri Sundaram, Karthik's mother

– By Linda Kastleman