

Seventh grader enrolls after Hurricane Irma

Seventh grader Sara Bharwani has enrolled in Greenhill mid-trimester after Hurricane Irma forced her to move to the United States from her home country of St. Maarten in the Caribbean.

According to the "Jamaica Observer," Irma caused approximately 1.4 billion dollars of damage in the Caribbean territories of St. Maarten and St. Barts. Sara and her family experienced a shortage of food, water and electricity due to the storm. During the storm, Sara's family faced nature in its most destructive state.

"Irma had 200 mph wind and was a category 5+ hurricane. Me and my family began to panic, and at that very moment I was thinking all the possible things that could happen," said Sara.

With the help of the United States government and Dutch Embassies, Sara and her dog, Marshmallow, were able to make it to Texas while her parents stayed behind to fix their house. Currently, she is staying with her cousins at Greenhill, freshmen Tej and Sonia and sophomore Ronak Dhingra.

As the storm ravaged St. Maarten, Sara had to find ways to deal with the destruction while hiding in her home.

"Adjusting to a new environment and not being with my parents is the hardest part, but the Greenhill community did a great job of welcoming me and is making my adjustment easier."

"The windows were shaking, and there were occasional 'clanks' because part of the roof was falling. I sat in the safe room



JOINING THE COMMUNITY: Sara Bharwani (second from left) came to Greenhill after evacuating from St. Maarten before Hurricane Irma. The Hurricane proved to be fatal, causing over 14 deaths on the island and billions of dollars in damage.

alone with my dog trying not to cry my eyes out when the lights went out. I heard glass and yelling as well as loud, harsh winds," Sara said.

According to Sara, she felt calmer after the eye of the storm passed because she knew that the worst part was over, but that calmness only lasted until she saw the effects on the island as a whole.

"As you're passing, imagine driving down a road and seeing every single house, car, and trailer falling one on top of each

other, and boats are just everywhere," she said.

Although the effects of the storm were grave, Sara was able to find some positive aspects of the disaster.

"It was actually very devastating, but very fun at the same time. I know that sounds very wrong, but it's because my friends and I were working together. I've never felt that much connection with anybody in my entire life," Sara said.

Sara has been on campus since Septem-

ber 2. Her initial reactions to the Greenhill community have been warm.

"The people are so nice and the school is so big. Everyone is so welcoming. We don't really do that in St. Maarten. If you're new, we introduce you to one class and just move on," she said.

She is currently taking the core Middle School academic classes, including math, science, English, and history, English being her favorite out of the four. In addition, Sara is also expanding her course load by taking alternative arts courses such as Video Production and painting. She has taken on Spanish as her preferred language.

"I love Video Production. I enjoy the projects we are doing in that class," Sara said.

The atmosphere that she has been put in has been a big change compared to her life back in St. Maarten. She now gets to experience what it is like to have siblings and live with a bigger family. At home, it's just Sara, her parents, and her dog.

Although her school did not get damaged in the storm, Sara is glad that Greenhill has taken her into the community.

"Adjusting to a new environment and not being with my parents is the hardest part, but the Greenhill community did a great job of welcoming me and is making my adjustment easier," Sara said.

Story by Raag Venkat, Sarah Luan, Mila Nguyen, Emma Light, and Brent Ladin

Greenhill participates in INDEX conference

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Each fall, Greenhill participates in a survey run by the Independent School Data Exchange (INDEX) Group to compare academic data, admissions statistics and financial information to 50 other comparable private schools.

Each of these schools collects identical data to then be compared at a large conference with each school's Head of School and Chief Financial Officer (CFO). On October 15 and 16, Head of School Scott Griggs and new CFO Kendra Grace attended the INDEX conference.

"We really like INDEX because those schools are similar to Greenhill so it makes the data more comparable," said Mrs. Grace.

Each conference takes place at a different school that belongs to INDEX. This year, the conference took place at Colorado Academy in Denver.

Based on the results of the conference and the information from other schools, Greenhill can see where it stands in relation to other partner schools. Mr. Griggs has been to the conference several times, but for Mrs. Grace, it was her first time representing Greenhill.

Mrs. Grace is currently in her first year at Greenhill as the Chief Financial Officer/Chief Operating Officer, replacing Melissa Orth. Mrs. Grace was previously the Director of Finance at The Covenant School of Dallas.

Information at this conference included fiscal measurements and data regarding years of experience of Greenhill faculty. INDEX creates a report complete with the masses of data that each of the schools provides. At the conference, the reports are

anonymous, but each individual school can see how their data compares to the others. Greenhill wants to ensure that it is not an outlier from the other schools, and tracks the data of the other peer-institutions.

"We set benchmarks, we want to be within a range of what INDEX gives us - so it's more of a guideline," said Mrs. Grace.

Results from this conference can introduce change at Greenhill. Several years ago, information from the conference revealed that Greenhill was spending a greater amount on utilities than other schools. As a result, Greenhill worked to reduce its energy consumption, and the Lower School was awarded a LEED-EB (Existing Building) certification. They have continued to review utilities expense each year and have worked with the facilities department to make sure that they are conserving water and energy. This year at the conference, Greenhill fell perfectly in line with the other schools.

Due to location and other aspects, not all schools are going to track in line with the rest of the county. For example, Greenhill had its lowest attrition rate in 18 years of 3%. This puts Greenhill on the lower end of the INDEX schools in this statistic. Although Greenhill's attrition rate is low compared to other INDEX schools, this is a statistic the school would like to keep, according to Mrs. Grace.

"There can be skewed data. We are different from schools in California or the Northeast, but it all depends on the statistics you're looking at," Mrs. Grace said.

Mrs. Grace said the information at the conference does not paint the entire picture of a school.

"We compare our own results to prior years as well. But it's all really just a snapshot in time," Mrs. Grace said.







The change ignited by the data is not always immediate. The data can offer new long-term goals. The ideas and statistics from the conference help Greenhill determine their budget for upcoming years.

"The purpose of [the conference] is to provide us with good benchmarking information to make sure we are staying in line with our peer schools in all areas of our operations from academics, to facilities, to salaries and benefits," said Mrs. Grace.

This year, the conference brought light

to some academic accomplishments of Greenhill students. Out of all the schools in INDEX, Greenhill students had the highest percentage of students scoring 4-5 on the AP exams and the highest average score on the evidence-based reading and writing portion of the SAT.

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