Family Spotlight: At Home Away From Home

Namaste (hello),

We are a Hindi-speaking Indian family who came to Pittsburgh at the end of December 2013. Saatwik is the most energetic member of the family. He is now Mrs. Solomon’s friend in the Green Room and will turn 4 very soon. Mani (father) is a faculty in the department of chemical engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Bombay, India. He is on a one year sabbatical at CMU. Alka (mother) is a Ph.D. in computer science & engineering. For the last two years, she has been at home so that she can spend more time with Saatwik and in the process learn more about herself. In her spare time, she keeps herself professionally engaged by working as a research volunteer on research problems of her interest.

In India, we live in Mumbai, which is on the western sea coast. Known as the “city of dreams”, Mumbai is most famous for “Bollywood”, a term derived from Hollywood that represents the Hindi movie making industry in India. Though geographically not huge, India is culturally a very diverse country with more than 20 officially recognized languages and with 30 languages spoken by more than a million native speakers (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Languages_of_India). Even though not native to India, English is widely spoken as well. India is the biggest democracy in the world with almost all religions being practiced in the country.

This is the first visit for Alka and Saatwik to USA. When Saatwik would ask us in Mumbai about why we were going to USA, we told him that we were going to see the snow. He was really excited by that. Given the abundant snowfall last winter, we can confidently say that he was not disappointed. The snow made it easy for him to settle in Pittsburgh, and he is now rooting for a lot of snow this winter as well!! We (Alka and Mani), however found the weather harsh and daunting in the beginning. Slowly we realized that Pittsburgh is a fantastic place with lots of fun places, museums and friendly people. By summer, we completely understood why Pittsburgh is such a great place to stay.

We feel that the best part of our stay in Pittsburgh is that Saatwik really likes going to school. Initially, we were apprehensive about Saatwik being able to adjust in a totally different environment. Looking back at the events, we can now say that deciding to send Saatwik to the Children's School was one of the best decisions we made in our US trip. A pleasant thing has been that till this day, Saatwik has never refused to go to school, even during his initiation period. Personally for us, the Children's School has been more than just a school. We think of it as a big family that has been a source of information and support for us. Regarding pedagogy, we love the theme-based teaching practiced at the Children's School. We also love the fact that children are involved in cooking activities at school. As a result, Saatwik started helping in food preparation at home and also helps us buy groceries!!

We will be going back to India at the end this year. “Give them roots and give them wings” is our favorite quote that we read on the Children’s School notice board. We don't know how much Saatwik will remember about this School when he grows up, but we will cherish the memories and are sure that the process of developing his roots and wings has been truly set in motion during his time here. Finally, if any of you are thinking about escaping the coming (or rather ongoing) winter, we strongly recommend that you visit Mumbai - a city with no winter. We will be happy to host you.