

## **Sahana Nagarajan**

2023 CARTHA Fellow

Beginning in the fall of 2023, I am a freshman at Linn-Mar High School in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

Throughout my life, the concept of healing people through music has manifested itself in numerous ways, most recently in October 2022 through my participation in CARTHA's Musicality in Parks Initiative. Playing music in the Rotary Music Park with differently-abled people at Camp Courageous was a wonderful opportunity for me to experience how music brings people together. Through CARTHA, I hope to form a special bond with many differently-abled people and their caregivers through my musical healing journey.

I was lucky to be born into a household filled with music. I have been learning South Indian Classical Carnatic music since I was five years old. I have been trained in Carnatic vocal, violin, and keyboard. In 2018 and 2019, I won prizes in the T. Temple Tuttle Memorial Music Competition at the Cleveland Thyagaraja Festival. I continue to perform at a variety of concerts both online and in-person in the Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Chicago areas. I also play clarinet, piano, Western Classical violin, and sing in the school choir, and have participated in various honor events, such as Junior All State, METRO, Kennedy Orchestra, NEIBA, and IBA.

At an invited presentation at a senior living center, I shared aspects of Carnatic music along with my sister and father. Several of the elderly attendees in turn shared with me that these unfamiliar musical tones had felt soothing to them. I was immediately intrigued enough to do some online research on healing through music, and that is how I first learned that pleasant music releases serotonin, a "relaxation and happiness" chemical in the human brain! I made a brief presentation based on my research at the Linn County Fair, and my project got selected for display at the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines. As a CARTHA Fellow, I will continue to seek opportunities to elate elderly people and their caregivers with my musical abilities.

In addition to being on my school's tennis team, I have been participating in First LEGO League since 2016, and have been to the state competition three times. My team has also been to an international invitational event held in Razorback, Arkansas in May of 2022.