

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Media contact: Riya Jain, Founder & CEO, Voice Back | riya@voicebackapp.com | voicebackapp.com

Her Grandmother Refused to Sound Like a Robot, So This Duke Student Gave Her a Voice Back

Voice Back, created by 20-year-old solo founder Riya Jain, has passed 50,000 downloads in more than 23 countries

DURHAM, N.C. — [Month Day], 2026 — Riya Jain’s grandmother was a social butterfly. In 2024, ALS took her voice. The speech-generating apps her family found all sounded the same: flat, robotic, nothing like her. She refused to use them. To a woman whose whole life was conversation, speaking through a machine voice felt embarrassing, and she would rather stay quiet than sound like someone else.

Jain searched for an app that would let her grandmother bank her real voice and speak with it. She found nothing. So in August 2025, at 19 years old and with no formal engineering training, she taught herself to code and built it. She named it Voice Back.

Users upload or record just 10-60 seconds of speech, and the app clones their voice in seconds. Then, they can type in a modern text-to-speech board in their own cloned voice. It runs on the phone or tablet a person already owns and costs \$2.99 per month or \$23.99 for lifetime access, compared with the thousands of dollars a traditional augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device can cost.

“Everyone deserves to be heard with their own unique voice,” said Jain. “My grandma didn’t want a device that didn’t sound like her. Voice Back exists so that no one else has to choose between staying silent and sounding like a stranger.”

One year after launch, Voice Back has been downloaded more than 50,000 times in more than 23 countries and is used by people living with ALS and other conditions that take away speech. Voice Back’s mission is to help people facing speech loss preserve connection, identity, and comfort through the voices we love most.

Jain is supported by the Voice Back Advisory Team, a group of people living with ALS and other forms of speech loss who test every feature before it ships. Their feedback shapes what gets built, and their words explain why it matters.

“I found that I was limiting my conversations or just refusing to participate... becoming frustrated and insecure about the way I sounded,” said Kris MacNamara, who was diagnosed with ALS in July 2025. “Now, I have gained back confidence to speak, and it sounds just like me. It has given me back MY VOICE.”

Lizzy Hernandez, diagnosed in 2023, had tried other apps first. “I felt I sounded like Alexa,” she said. “With Voice Back I finally sound like myself again.”

“When ALS took away my ability to speak, it did not take away what I have to say,” said Dr. Kristie L. Taddie, a podiatrist diagnosed in May 2025. “Voice Back helps bridge the distance between the voice inside me and the world that still needs to hear it.”

Recognition and clinical relationships

- Duke University Melissa & Doug Cohort (top 5 undergrad startups)
- Collaboration with Dr. Richard Bedlack of the Duke ALS Clinic
- Featured on NPR’s How I Built This Advice Line with Guy Raz
- Partnership with the ALS Hope Foundation. Recommended by speech-language pathologists at Northwestern Medicine, Compassionate Care ALS, Advocate Health, ALS United, UNC ALS clinic, Les Turner ALS Foundation, Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist, and many more.

About Voice Back

Voice Back is a voice-banking and communication app that helps people losing their speech keep talking in their own voice. It was founded in August 2025 by Riya Jain, a junior at Duke University, after her grandmother lost her voice to ALS. Voice Back is available at voicebackapp.com.