

# Chiropractor adjusts her life to make room for needy

## Pikesville resident helps elderly, children and strays

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At her chiropractic office in Randallstown, Dr. Marlene N. Mahipat typically sees 100 patients a week. But each day, she makes time for charity.

Mahipat has established two nonprofit foundations in the last five years. One assists children, and the other cares for animals. She has volunteered for Meals on Wheels for longer than she can remember. Twice a month, she turns her waiting room into a production line so she and her assistant can put together bag lunches for delivery to the homeless. Her charitable attitude can be infectious.

"Sometimes, a patient will arrive too late for an appointment, but not too late to help us make sandwiches" she said.

She leaves the lunch hour wide open twice a week to allow time for transporting hot and cold meals to about 24 elderly or disabled Meals on Wheels clients. Before the start of the school year, she fills backpacks with supplies for needy students. She organizes a coat-and-blanket drive in the fall. She turns her own October birthday into a local shelter's Halloween pizza party for children. During the holidays, she provides groceries to dozens of families, takes gifts to the neighborhood nursing home and tries to fill the wish lists of many underprivileged children.

"I grew up poor," Mahipat said of her childhood in Trinidad. "But when beggars came to our gate, my parents always showed us how to share what we had."

The 44-year-old Pikesville resident came to the United States in 1990 to complete her education. She decided chiropractics meshed well with her own holistic lifestyle. After graduating from Sherman College of Chiropractic in South Carolina, she settled on Maryland, basically because she liked the idea of four seasons, Mahipat said.

She worked for a health care provider for about a year but decided to go out on her own, setting up a practice in 2003 with one piece of equipment and heating pads. She built a business on referrals, she said. Last year, Mahipat won the Top 100 Minority Business Enterprise Award, a tribute to outstanding business owners in Maryland and the surrounding states.

"I came to this country from humble beginnings," she said. "But even in this economy, I have been successful."

Mahipat pursues charitable endeavors with as much energy and purpose as her career.

"When you are blessed in life, you need to give back," she said. "If you make charity part of your daily routine, you will find time for others."

Her Meals on Wheels visits planted the seed for People Letting Every Animal Survive Euthanization or the PLEASE Foundation. She met many elderly people struggling financially to care for their pets and began delivering dog and cat food, bird seed, even lettuce for a gerbil. Now she also handles and pays for veterinarian visits.

"As long as these people can provide their pets with a loving, safe environment, I can give them everything else," she said. "For some elderly, a pet is a lifeline. So, this helps keep everybody healthy."

Mahipat has established a network of foster homes for stray pets, a few of which she has adopted. Through PLEASE, she is raising funds to build an animal shelter and maybe a mobile veterinary clinic. Last year, the foundation assisted about 400 animals.

Through Helping Orphans Prosper Everywhere or the HOPE Foundation, she provides needy children with everything from food and clothing to vitamins and school supplies. She was raised in the Hindu faith, but takes every opportunity to help others celebrate

Christmas. Twenty area families received two weeks' worth of groceries in December and nearly 100 children, 24 of whom live at a homeless shelter, received toys and clothing, all gift wrapped.

"My office looks like Santa's workshop in December," she said.

A few dedicated volunteers have joined her in both foundations, but Mahipat willingly shoulders most of the work and the financial responsibility.

"When you think your life is bad, try helping the homeless and the hungry and the orphaned," she said. "It grounds you."

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