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Marriottsville/Sykesville/Woodstock

Biji James

443-207-0292

biji315@yahoo.com

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Chiropractor serves orphans, pets in area

Over the holidays, my neighbor Lucy Reese told me about Marlene Mahipat and the various causes she is involved in. Marlene is a local chiropractor. Lucy told me how amazed she is by Marlene and the number of organizations that she is involved in. After speaking to Marlene myself, I, too, am blown away by how selfless she is.

Marlene grew up in Trinidad and is a second-generation East Indian. She told me that she is one of five children and that her family was not wealthy. While growing up, there weren't birthday gifts or celebrations. They may have received one gift over the holidays. She remembered the elated feeling she had when she received a red rubber ball one Christmas and thought how she would like the opportunity to have other children experience that same feeling she had.

She came to America and pursued her studies in Florida while working two jobs. She considered herself very blessed and wanted to assist people in need. She started tutoring at a local community center and met many poor families.

Marlene decided to take some of the money she earned to assist some of these families by buying school supplies and clothes for these folks. She also would collect 50 shoeboxes and fill them with various toiletries and toys. She then distributed 25 of these shoeboxes to families in need around the neighborhood. She would send the other 25 to a foreign country.

She went to chiropractic school full time in South Carolina. It was there she was introduced to the idea of alternative therapies. She proposed a program to the school with some of her classmates where pets would be used for therapy in nursing homes. They received clearance from the nursing home to bring their pets in and thus, the program was born and is still being used today.

She came to Maryland in 2002 and worked with a company until 2004, when she decided to venture out and start her own practice. With being her own boss, she set her own hours and started volunteering more. She is part of "Meals on Wheels" once a week, where she delivers meals to folks who are homebound in the Randallstown and Owings Mills area. She makes sandwiches for the homeless and brings them downtown. That is no easy task considering she is a vegetarian and she is making sandwiches which contain meat.

She holds many canned food drives and fundraisers in her office for various homeless shelters in the city. Her birthday is Oct. 30, and she celebrates it by providing a pizza dinner for the folks at the homeless shelter. Since it is the day before Halloween, she brings in bags of candy to share with the children at the homeless shelter.

Over the holidays, needy families get in touch with her and they all gather together at the Church of Truth Cathedral downtown. She gets the podiatrist who works in the office next to hers to dress up as Santa Claus. Marlene gets a big kick out of him playing Santa, considering the fact that he's Jewish. Dr. Jerry Katz dresses up in the red jolly suit and the children have the opportunity to have their photo taken with Santa. He then distributes the toys to the children.

Through her work with Meals on Wheels, she saw a need for the pets of the recipients of the meals. The pets needed to be fed as well, so she started purchasing cat food and dog food so it could be delivered to the folks who had pets. She would encourage the pet owners to get shots for their pets and she would then reimburse them for doing so. She has given money to the animal shelter to extend the lives of the animals that were set for termination.

She knew the animals that survived Hurricane Katrina would be put down unless she could raise money. Her pet foundation, People Letting Every Animal Survive Euthanasia, was created so that people could work together to help keep animals alive.

In 2005, she went to an orphanage in Mexico to deliver toys and food. She made another trip to the orphanage in 2006, along with a trip to a Trinidad orphanage, where she gave vitamins along with the food and toys. She started the organization, Helping Orphans Prosper Everywhere, two years ago.

Marlene states that she feels so blessed in this life and that is what makes her want to give back. She recently started a mentorship program, "Healing Through Service," where she works with children from a children's guild who have spent time in homeless shelters. They are now giving back by serving others.

The children helped Marlene decorate the shelter over the holidays with a Christmas tree that they brought. They baked cookies for the residents. They have helped serve at Bea Gaddy's soup kitchen. Marlene told me the children are coming from the other side now and realize how fortunate they are and are giving back.

If you would like to more information on any of the causes Marlene is involved in or would like to contribute towards these causes, please make checks for the orphan foundation payable to: Helping Orphans Prosper Everywhere. Your entire donation goes to the foundations and are tax deductible. Her work address is 5310 Old Court Road, Suite 301, Randallstown, MD 21133. You can also e-mail her at helpingorphansprosper@yahoo.com or drmmahipat@yahoo.com. Her phone number is 410-655-8900.