

DC makes kindness part of her routine



Earlier this year, *The Baltimore Sun* published an article about Marlene N. Mahipat, DC, whose chiropractic office in Randallstown, Maryland, is the hub for her incredible efforts to help not only her patients but her entire community.

Dr. Mahipat is active in the local Meal-on-Wheels program and twice a month she and her assistants (often her patients) turn the waiting room into a bag lunch assembly line, prepping meals for delivery to the homeless. Then there's her **HOPE (Helping Orphans Prosper Everywhere) Foundation**, through which she provides children with food, clothing, vitamins and school supplies and the **PLEASE (People Letting Every Animal Survive Euthanization) Foundation**, which helps elderly residents pay for food and vet bills for their much-loved pets.

Born in Trinidad, Mahipat is a graduate of Sherman College of Chiropractic and opened her office in Maryland on a shoestring with one piece of equipment and a couple of heating pads. Embodying the truth of "give and you shall receive," her practice quickly grew through referrals and last year she won the Top 100 Minority Business Enterprise Award, a tribute to outstanding business owners in Maryland and the surrounding states.

Mahipat is also the recipient of numerous awards, including: Maryland Top 100 Women, The Meals on Wheels Volunteer of the Year, and Women Making a Difference (from the Baltimore County Commission for Women). She's also a finalist in the 2011 Maryland Health Care Heroes campaign.



In an interview with *The Chiropractic Journal*, she explains more about her background and attitudes on chiropractic and life.

The Chiropractic Journal: You mentioned in The Baltimore Sun article that you were raised to believe you should help others. Tell us more about that.

Marlene Mahipat, DC: My parents were instrumental in my teachings. I grew up very poor in Trinidad and we didn't have a lot. My parents used to say "necessities ... not wants" and this is a philosophy I still live by today. We didn't have enough for ourselves yet when the beggars came to our gate, my parents never turned them away. I saw my parents cut their portion of food in half just to give to the beggars. My father used to take clothes from his closet and give to these beggars at the gate.

I tried to follow their example but sometimes it got me in a lot of trouble. I would give my crayons, pencils and books to kids in my class who had none. My parents were always having to replace my school supplies but I felt sorry for the kids who didn't have these things. This is one reason why every year, I give backpacks full of school supplies to needy children in our community.

TCJ: You obviously love helping others. Is that one reason you chose to become a chiropractor?

MM: Actually, I came to the United States with the intention of going to medical school. At some point I realized that the medical model didn't resonate with me. I searched out alternative health approaches and found chiropractic. The first school I toured was Sherman College and I was impressed with the philosophy, the dedication and conviction of the teachers and staff. I was enlightened and felt that this is where I belong.

TCJ: You have a busy practice, PLUS all this volunteer work. How do you manage to fit so much into one day?

MM: I make my volunteer work part of my routine. For instance, I know that I feed the homeless every two weeks on a Friday afternoon, Meals-On-Wheels same day and time every week, and caring for rescued animals every day. Those are routine and everything else becomes a planned or scheduled event.

For example, backpacks every school year, bringing pets of the elderly or disabled to the vet, and events at the homeless shelters and nursing homes during various holidays. When things are not done in this fashion, my life can become very overwhelming.

TCJ: The article also mentioned that you turn your waiting room into a food production line ... how do your patients feel about your volunteer work?

MM: Surprisingly, my patients don't seem to mind. They have become so used to this "routine" that they often show up with extra items to be included in the bags for the homeless.

TCJ: Does any of your volunteer work involve providing chiropractic care?

MM: Yes, but mostly when I go to the orphanages in third world countries. I do a full exam on the children as well as realign their spines. I bring my portable table at the beginning of the school year to the homeless shelters in Baltimore, on the day I hand out the backpacks full of school supplies. I check their spines and "turn the light on" to get them ready for the school year.

TCJ: Do you think this kind of community service helps your practice?

MM: Yes, but not in the way one would think. I don't necessarily get a large number of new patients but it adds credibility with my existing patients. They feel more secure, comfortable and like family. This helps me keep my patients long-term and they refer their family and friends. They trust I have their best interest at heart, and make their health a priority regardless of their financial situation. Some of my patients say how blessed they feel that they are able to help the needy. When they come by and help make sandwiches, I thank them, but they turn around and tell me, "No, thank *you* for allowing us to share in this blessing."

TCJ: What advice would you give other doctors – particularly new ones – about balancing business with giving?

MM: Charitable works needs to become routine or scheduled around your business to make it work. There has to be some kind of flow between the two, but at the same time kept separate. When I first started in private practice, in spite of having bills to pay, the priority was helping people. With this intention the practice grew and so did the number of charitable works. This is where a flow between the two happened. The days and times I see patients, the patients are the priority and I try not to schedule too many other things to interrupt that intention. Likewise, on the days I do charitable works that is the priority and my focus.

TCJ: Can you give us an example of a recent volunteer moment that was particularly "special" for you?

MM: A few weeks ago, I was delivering Meals-On-Wheels to Mr. E., one of my regulars, who is wheelchair bound and lives on a fixed income with a 11-year-old cocker-spaniel named Tiki. When I arrived, I noticed Tiki hadn't touched her food and instead of greeting me at the door, she just lay in her bed. I asked if she was alright and her owner said she hadn't been feeling well for the past week but he had no money to take her to the vet.

I still had 14 deliveries to make and wasn't sure when I'd be done, but I took the phone number of Tiki's doctor and set up an appointment for later that day. After I finished my deliveries, I went back to Mr. E and picked up Tiki and took her to the vet. He did her exam, x-rays and updated all of her shots. He gave her some antibiotics and some IV fluids because she was very dehydrated. By the time I took her back to Mr. E, Tiki was her old self again. As I was leaving he said to me, "she is all I have."

TCJ: *Is there anything we forgot to ask that you'd like to share with our readers?*

MM: I've always loved animals and it's sad when people mistreat them. They don't have a voice to speak up for themselves, so this is why we need to be their voices. My grand father used to say that God lives in everything, so we should always be kind. I love children, animals, and the elderly because they are the ones who generally get taken for granted. I serve as a voice and a support structure for them. If I can make a difference in the life of one child, elderly person, or an animal, then my entire life would have had purpose.

We can all make a difference in this world. We can all live our lives with purpose. We can all be a voice for the disadvantaged and the weak. When I go to bed every night, I ask the question, "is God proud of me today?" I always want the answer to be YES, and that keeps me in check. (Readers may contact Dr. Mahipat at mediquestchiro@gmail.com)