

Global Community Service: An SCPMG Physician Improves Lives 9000 Miles Away

By Leslie Dodson

Chilmula (Raj) Reddy, MD, Nephrology, Los Angeles Medical Center, has been caring for patients with Kaiser Permanente (KP) since 1972. Long before joining KP, however, Dr Reddy was living 9000 miles away in a poor farming village outside of Hyderabad, India. Dr Reddy is keenly aware that he did not make his journey alone, and he acknowledges that he would not be where he is today without the support of family and the educational system in India. It is with that strong feeling of gratitude that he delivers a passionate commitment to community service that reaches beyond the boundaries of Southern California. His dedication travels to the heart of the Hyderabad and nearby communities, helping to sustain educational infrastructures and improve access to education for young people living there today.

“People from poor farming villages had limited resources to send their children to neighboring towns for school. My own grandparents could not write their names,” recalled Dr Reddy. “My father, however, had a different mindset. Education was so important to him that he made great sacrifices to provide me with home tutoring until I was old enough to travel to school on my own.”

After his father’s death when he was 13, Dr Reddy, remembering his father’s commitment to education, worked hard in school to pursue premed studies and medical school free of charge at local colleges. He stayed free of charge in the dormitory.

Giving Back

After completing his residency in England, Dr Reddy settled in Los Angeles in 1970. His generous cycle of giving back began in 1971,



The new junior college building dedicated to Dr Reddy’s parents in Bhongir, India.

while visiting India after many years. While on that trip, he reimbursed his old community dormitory in full. “The dormitory administrators were surprised. No one had ever asked if they could give money back for their free room and board,” recalled Dr Reddy. “Today, public colleges in India have ten students for every one seat in class, which makes it really overcrowded. In order to sustain access to education for less fortunate students, those of us who have the ability to support school systems in India must do so. I personally felt obligated to pay my dormitory back for the valuable gift of room and board that I received as a student.”

Over the years, Dr Reddy continued to give sizeable monetary contributions, including, in 1996, an additional donation of \$35,000 to his old dormitory. His example of giving back to the public education system has influenced his peers from India as well; they are following Dr Reddy’s lead and are giving back to their hometowns in India.

“I’m truly inspired by Dr Reddy’s contributions to education in his homeland. He has strengthened communities and touched many young lives,” said Maureen Spell, MD, Chief, Internal Medicine, KP Los Angeles Medical Center. “Dr Reddy’s diligent work and end results for the Hyderabad community embody the core values of Kaiser Permanente. He is promoting a stronger world community, and his story encourages others to reach out and become active in helping to improve the lives of others.”

Connecting with Roots

Dr Reddy’s charitable works in his homeland help keep him bonded to his parents. “I miss my parents more now than when I was a child. I find that I have a deep desire to connect with my roots, so I always dedicate my donations and projects in my parents’ or grandparents’ names.”

In January 2003, Dr Reddy donated a 40,000-square-foot building to the junior college at

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Bhangir (near Hyderabad), that bears his parents' names. In 1996, he donated a science lab to another high school at Valiqanda (near Hyderabad) named for his maternal grandparents. In November 2003, his entire family, including his son, Naveen C Reddy, MD, Emergency Department, KP Los Angeles Medical Center, traveled to India to dedicate the new building. "I could not control my emotions when I went back to Hyderabad for the dedication," said the senior Dr Reddy. "The sentiment and response from people who were eager to speak with me, shake my hand, or just cheer—it was all extremely moving for me."

The younger Dr Reddy understands just how important his father's accomplishment is for the Hyderabad community. "My father is from a *real* village community—not a big



Friends and family at the dedication.

city where there are more educational resources," explained Dr Reddy. "This building offers farmers and people with extremely limited opportunities a place to come and learn English, which is the gateway to advancement in India."

"The money spent and the scope of the project may not seem like a lot here in the United States, but in a small village community it goes a long way. Donations are always wonderful, but it's often difficult to know where the money is going. In my father's case, the school building is a direct, tangible result of his philanthropy."

Future Efforts

Although Dr Reddy is an active participant in local and national Indian cultural associations in the United States, such as the American Telugu Association and the American Association of Physicians from India (AAPDI), he continues his efforts to sustain and build educational resources for students in India. Dr Reddy is also the founder of the Chilmula Foundation, which is registered in Los Angeles and provides sizeable contributions to help students in India pursue their studies.

"Each year, the foundation gives 12 schol-



Dr Reddy, speaking at the building dedication, stated, "This is a gift from America."

arships, and we hope to augment the contribution in the future," said Dr Reddy. "I'm also working with representatives from a neighboring village to develop a suitable school building for its youth. This building will be dedicated to my father's grandparents."

India doesn't see this type of philanthropy every day, which makes the country's reporters constantly ask why Dr Reddy gives so generously. "I'm just paying back my dues," he answers. "Everyone has always been surprised at my desire to pay back the system that gave me such an invaluable education. I'm surprised that others don't see that way too." ❖

Fragrance

A bit of fragrance always clings to the hand that gives the rose.

— Chinese proverb