

SARATOGA

AUGUST 2020

Spotlight

An exclusive magazine serving the residents of Saratoga

The Heart of Saratoga



Sangita and Sesh:

Inspiring Care in Our Community and Beyond

Cover photo by Hyunah Jang, of Hyunah Jang Photography



Best Version Media®



Sangita and Sesh

Inspiring Care in Our Community and Beyond

By Genevieve Laucher

Sangita Seshadri and Sesh Ramaswami believe that everyone can make a positive impact. Saratoga residents since the mid-90s, Sangita and Sesh have certainly made a big difference in our community and around the world through their work with the Rotary Club of Saratoga.

Sesh and Sangita were both born in India and moved to the U.S. in their twenties. Sesh was born in Bangalore and went to high school in Bombay (now called Mumbai) where he was actively involved in scouting, reaching the rank of President Scout (equivalent of Eagle Scout in the U.S.). His family played a big role in his life. His grandfather was president of the Rotary Club of Bangalore in the mid-1950s.

After graduating from Indian Institute of Technology with a degree in chemical engineering, Sesh moved to the U.S. for graduate school in upstate New York. Sesh discovered maple glazed donuts, venison with mint jelly, and cholesterol laden subs and calzones. Serendipitously, during some evening seminars over pizza, Sesh was introduced to the emerging semiconductor industry. After graduating, he moved to the Bay Area in the mid-80s and went to work for National Semiconductor in Sunnyvale.

Sangita spent her formative years in a small town in western India where her mother was a gynecologist and her father was an engineer in the nuclear power industry. Sangita and her family moved to Bombay when she was a teenager and that is where she attended college. She was always interested in a medical career because of her mother and earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in biochemistry. While in college she often volunteered in orphanages and was motivated to help the less fortunate.

Sangita and Sesh were family friends and were introduced by their families. They got married in the mid-80s, and Sangita moved to the U.S. to join Sesh. Sangita continued her education and earned her PhD at University of California, Santa Cruz. During this time, a friend introduced her to organizations that were doing community outreach and working with homeless shelters.

Sangita and Sesh decided to start a family and brought their son into the world in 1992. They named him Dhruv, which means North Star. It was a busy but joyful time raising Dhruv while both Sesh and Sangita continued their education, Sesh earning his MBA while also working, and Sangita earning her PhD. Sangita often took Dhruv to school with her.



Celebrating the day with Sesh's parents



Proud parents with their son, Dhruv

Their family continued to do community service as Dhruv was growing up. He went to an Indian school similar to a Sunday school, and through that, they would go to a homeless shelter in the morning and make breakfasts and lunches. It was a nice family activity and something Dhruv also valued greatly. It showed him that it was possible to make a positive difference. He continued to be involved in community service through college. Dhruv is now attending grad school in Cleveland and earning his PhD in biomedical engineering. He got his interest in the medical side from his grandma and Sangita and the engineering bent of mind from Sesh.

Sesh is passionate about flying. He obtained his Gliding Pilot License in India during his undergraduate days. He continued flying after he moved to the Bay Area. He was featured talking about flying in a full-page recruitment advertisement for his employer Advanced Micro Devices in the local Bay Area newspaper. After earning his MBA, Sesh moved to Applied Materials in a position that combined technology and business. He is still with Applied Materials and enjoys travel for work and pleasure. Sesh strongly believes that global travel and meeting people from diverse backgrounds and cultures has helped him broaden his perspective. In professional and personal life, Sesh likes to mentor young engineers and youth.



Family, including Sangita's parents

Sesh was encouraged to join Saratoga Rotary by Dave Eshleman, a Saratoga resident, and joined Rotary in 2008. Over the next few years, he discovered his passion for international projects. He saw how the Rotary organizations could really make a big difference. Over about three years, the Saratoga Rotary and the Bangalore Rotary, where Sesh had grown up, worked together on a water project at about 23 schools that impacted about 5,000 kids. The project involved getting clean drinking water, building new bathrooms, and providing sanitation in the poorer communities.

India became independent from Britain in 1947, and a lot of the schools were built around then and in need of work. The Rotary International aims to improve the overall health of kids so they can come to a clean school and stay healthy. Called the WaSH project, they focus on water, sanitation, and hygiene. Rotary assesses the community needs, develops a plan, raises the funds, executes the projects, and manages it for sustainability. With encouragement from Jit Kapur, a longtime member of the club and mentor, Sesh got to witness the power of partnership and work with Rotarians around the world, all for a good cause, making sure the projects were successful.

Sangita continues to be interested in the medical industry. After earning her PhD, she worked with Inhale Therapeutics. There, she worked on inhaled insulin, the first drug of its kind, and was part of the journey to launch it as a commercial drug. Sangita continues to work for the pharmaceutical industry as a consultant. Through Rotary, Sangita heard about a project called Rotaplast.

Rotaplast is an organization started by a Rotarian who is a plastic surgeon. Rotaplast goes all over the world to perform cleft lip and cleft palate surgeries on children who need it but cannot afford it. Some of these children have difficulty with eating, drinking, or speaking properly, and are sometimes shunned by their community. When the Saratoga Rotary was going on a Rotaplast mission, Sangita contacted the Rotary to see if she could join even though she was not yet part of the club. Sangita had raised money before for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society by walking marathons and reached

Continued on next page...

RESIDENT FEATURE

out to the community to raise funds for Rotaplast. Sangita went to Guatemala with the Rotaplast mission in 2014, and it was a life-changing experience. She saw kids whose lives were truly transformed because of the surgery and felt that her life transformed as well. At that moment, she knew she wanted to continue with the Rotary.



Sesh at one of WASH projects, Bangalore, India



Sangita, Rotary Polio immunization in Nigeria

Sangita officially joined the Saratoga Rotary in 2015 and is honored to be part of the organization. She has now done six missions with Rotaplast. Every place she goes is a new learning experience, and she loves meeting the people who support the cause. All the people involved are so selfless with their time and energy, and Sangita continues to learn more and more.

Sangita grew up with supportive parents and grandparents who emphasized the importance of education for women even before this was common in India. They also supported kids who didn't have financial resources to attend school. Sangita wanted to follow in their footsteps and began looking for opportunities to mentor kids. In 2011, she joined California Community Partners for Youth, an organization in East San Jose that works with at-risk youth. It was an eye-opening experience, and Sangita found that most of the kids were looking for a shoulder to lean on. She was happy to be there for them, and recently one of her first mentees finished his master's degree in education. It was gratifying to witness this transformation.

Sesh and Sangita largely channel their passion for service through the Rotary Club of Saratoga. The club works on international and local projects. While participating in a National Immunization Day for Polio in Nigeria, the local Rotarians identified a rural school in need of refurbishment. The club funded and successfully completed this project and now are working on another school for children with special needs. Members of the club have also done school projects in Mexico and Tanzania. Rotarians are always finding creative ways to get their impactful projects done successfully.

In addition to international projects, the club also works with local high school youth. One example is a program called the Enterprise Leadership Conference, where students get to learn about business and entrepreneurship, as well as working together in a team. Sesh participates as a mentor and trainer.

Sesh is now starting his term as the President of the Rotary Club of Saratoga starting July 2020 and Sangita is the President-elect for the year starting July 2021. They have loved getting to know the community through the Rotary and meeting so many caring people. Sesh's parents moved to Saratoga a few years ago and now live with Sesh and Sangita. They have come to know and love the Rotarians as well.

Saratoga Rotary is actively working on addressing community

needs pertaining to homelessness and youth education through hands-on volunteering and monetary donations. The Saratoga Rotary and community has become like a family, and Sangita and Sesh have learned that everyone can make a difference in the world.

The Rotary is so impactful because they don't just build something and walk away. Rather, they educate and train the community about maintenance and sustainability. Anyone interested can join the Rotary - the more people involved, the better! Even a small group of people can make an amazing impact at a local and international level.

If you are interested in joining the Saratoga Rotary, please visit saratogarotary.org.



PHOTOGRAPHY VIDEO



HJ@HyunahJang.com
347.840.1580
www.HyunahJang.com