

Madison Westside NEIGHBORS

AUGUST 2022

Photo by Molly Mo Photography

MEET
**Inderjit Kaur
& Shavinder Singh**



Best Version Media

Madison Westside NEIGHBORS

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FEEDBACK, IDEAS, SUBMISSIONS

Madison Westside Neighbors is all about bringing people together. Is there a wonderful person, place or thing in your neighborhood we should write about? Send your feedback, ideas, articles and photos to vkovach@bestversionmedia.com.

Deadline for submissions is the 10th of the month prior to publication.

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AUGUST DREAMS

DEAR NEIGHBOR,

This month, get to know our featured residents Inderjit Kaur and Shavinder Singh, who share their unforgettable story of coming to America against all odds.

Welcome to our newest Expert Contributor, Brian Olson of Dale's Heating and Air Conditioning, which has been serving our community since his dad started the business over 30 years ago. We look forward to learning Brian's expert advice in a future issue very soon!

Have you heard about the Sandwich Generation? Our Wealth Management Expert Contributor, LaShell Lentz of Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC, has valuable information about how people supporting both kids and parents can plan wisely for their own future.

Joey VanMatre, owner of TruHome Inc/Bath Planet of Madison, our Bath Remodeling Expert Contributor, has great information on options for remodeling a master bath, with all sorts of configurations you'll want to learn about.

And in our Sports Section, find out about Paul's Party, the nonprofit organization dedicated to helping physically challenged kids participate in athletics and recreation. Don't miss PaulPalooza, the all-day music festival fundraiser to support Paul's Party.



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Enjoy this month's magazine!



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Inderjit Kaur & Shavinder Singh

By Vesna Vuynovich Kovach

JALPOT, INDIA: POPULATION APPROXIMATELY 115.

"No bus. No bank. Nothing," says Inderjit Kaur, whose parents and epileptic brother still live there. "I am the eldest daughter. I saw the first seizures come when he was just 1½ years old. The doctors gave him medicine, and said next time, bring him to the hospital. But we couldn't afford it. In India, you have to

deposit money before they will do anything."

Inderjit determined she would make a difference for her family someday. "I saw the people who had gone abroad, how their family situation changed. My mother said, 'That's OK, we are all together—that's more blessings.' But I said, 'No, I have to work hard and raise my family a little bit.'"

Her parents "put me in a school where we studied everything in English," which cost extra. "My father always encouraged me to learn more things, to become more qualified." She says it's unusual for a father to encourage a daughter in this way.

"My brothers and sister worked hard for me. They never complained, like why

I needed new clothes more often, because my aim was to help our family. I still did every task—cooking, cleaning, working in the field." She also tutored other children to bring in more.

The other students were alarmed at her hands, rough and cracked from working. "They said, 'You don't have to do that. You have to look sweet, for when you interview for a job!'"

Inderjit would tell them, "Hard working always looks good."

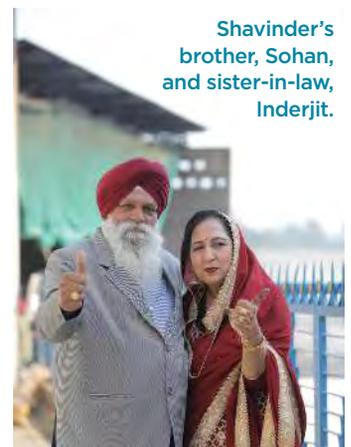
In India, she says, for young people entering the workforce, good grades aren't enough. "You have to be on top of the list, and then your parents have to pay for you to get an interview, too." Luckily, thanks to a friend from school, Inderjit never had to pay for her interview at Lovely Professional University, where she worked for the next seven years.

Inderjit was employed first as a ward nurse without pay, then ran the biotechnology lab and taught students. She often worked 12 hours a day, while still furthering her education. There were no opportunities for financial aid as we're accustomed to. "I never got one rupee," she says. She would purchase medicine for the people in her village, and give it to them for free. "I am always thankful for my people from my village. It is with their blessing that I am here."

One day she got called in to her superiors. "I was scared. Why are they interviewing me again?" It turned out that the students she worked with had gotten together to write a letter to the dean praising her teaching, and they needed a better teacher to run the physics lab. "I was a little nervous and asked, please, if I am not able to do this, will I be taken out of the university? They said, 'Nothing like that! Physics is totally different—I



The first time Shavinder was able to send money home to his parents, Fakir Chad and Darshan Kaur, they bought this tractor—and got dressed up for this photo to send back to their son in the US!



Shavinder's brother, Sohan, and sister-in-law, Inderjit.



Tamanna made salad for the family, and they sat together to enjoy.

hadn't used a vernier caliper for years!"

In India, Inderjit was able to help her brother's medical needs, but only as long as she stayed unmarried. "In my country, a woman has to support her in-laws, or society will ruin your family. There are so many mouths to say so many words," she explains. She loved her work, but she had to find a way out.

Meantime, Inderjit's parents had befriended a family in the town of Nadala, some 30 miles away. Their son, Shavinder, was living in the US. Might Inderjit be interested in getting to know him? "Yes!" she recalls. A four-year courtship followed, conducted by phone and What's App, and they became engaged.

in 2004, along with dozens of other young men whose parents had scraped together the fees to pay an agent to transport them legally to the US. Shavinder's family had even sold off some of their farmland. He never learned what went away. He made his way to his sister's home in New York City. She and her husband gave him unpaid work and a place to sleep on the couch for the next three years.

Gradually, he learned English, and moved to St. Louis, where Nikku—the nickname of his best friend from school—lived with his mother. "She told him, 'Stay with us, and don't worry about rent. Send money home to your parents.' She is a very softhearted, kind lady," says Inderjit.

Shavinder got a dishwasher job and began to work his way up in the restaurant business, moving to Appleton, Rockford, and,

SHAVINDER SINGH WAS 21 when he found himself dropped off unexpectedly in Mexico



RESIDENT FEATURE

eventually, Madison. “His > aim was to earn a name in the US,” says Inderjit. “To show what God has made for him. He has so much patience. He’s honest, loyal, hardworking and kind to everyone.”

Then, in 2013, after her visa application had been rejected once, Inderjit finally got the opportunity to visit America, to work at a NASA conference, and she and Shavinder were soon married.

Inderjit’s old life was over. If she returned to Punjab, society would force her to live with Shavinder’s parents in their town, and never help her brother again. Also, by the terms of her visa, she couldn’t return to the US for 10 years.

And there was something else: “I was blessed with my first daughter.”

But then, Shavinder needed heart surgery. “There are so many friends and neighbors who helped us a lot in Madison,” says Inderjit. A few years later, their second daughter was born premature and spent nearly 3 months in the NICU. “It was very scary. The doctors, the social workers, they guided me and helped me to move forward, pointed me to resources. I came to know what the United States is.”

In SEPTEMBER 2019, Shavinder and Inderjit bought the Indian restaurant in the strip mall on Mineral Point Road at D’Onofrio Drive and reopened it as Royal Indian Cuisine, featuring the foods of their native North India—and including a sumptuous buffet. Then COVID happened. “It was a very challenging time. It was the first business we owned, so we weren’t eligible for some of the relief grants and loans.”



“My in-law family gives me support, strength and confidence,” says Inderjit. L-R: Shavinder’s brother, Sohan Singh Parmar, daughter, Ravneet Kaur, who is a nurse in Canada, son, Harshdeep Singh Parmar, and wife, who is also named Inderjit Kaur.

But the family—and their new business—made it through, with reviews raving about Shavinder’s cooking. With hard work, they’re able to help their families back home live a better life.

Their older daughter, Tamanna Parmar, turns 8 in September, and will be entering 3rd grade at Anana Elementary in the fall. Her little sister, Jasmine Parmar, is 4. They enjoy swimming



and ballet at the YMCA, attend Badger Gymnastics, and study ballet at Premier Dance Academy. During summer vacation, they come along to the restaurant where they have fun with a kiddie pool, sidewalk chalks and a splash pad out back. And of course, with their phones and iPad.

For birthdays and other special occasions, Inderjit's mother likes to send the girls fancy traditional shararas—tunic and flared pant sets. "They understand Punjabi, but they won't speak it," says Inderjit. "They respond in English, and they teach us some words in English, too. When I make a mistake, they'll say, 'Oh, Mommy, you are silly!' They correct us all the time." •



A huge thank-you to Molly (Picard) Christiansen for nominating her neighbors Inderjit and Shavinder as this month's residents! We featured Molly in February.