

Student Donates Medical Supplies

by

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Staff nurse Losana (third from left), with Nivita Sharma's family at Solevu Medical Clinic.



This is her second visit to Fiji
JYOTI PRATIBHA
NADI

For a 17-year-old pre-medical American student, giving something back to her country meant donating medical supplies to various hospitals in Fiji.

Nivita Sharma was born in Australia where her parents initially moved to from Fiji. She still considers Fiji her own country. Recently, Ms Sharma got together medical supplies worth F\$5000 for clinics on Mana Island.

This is her second medical mission. Her first in July last year when she donated supplies to the CWM, Sigatoka, and Navua hospitals, and the Korolevu, Korovisilou, Cuvu, and Lomawai clinics.

She will be visiting some of these medical facilities as she had compiled a needs list in her last visit.

This year, Ms Sharma contacted the general manager of Mana Island Resort, Ulrich Hoffgen, who suggested that she help Solevu and Yaro village medical clinics.

“After liaising with staff at Mana (Vini and Cecilia Frost) from America my dad called the nurse, Losana, at the Solevu clinic and asked if she would provide a list of needs. We then put together a package of about 23kg valued at approximately F\$5000 and brought it all the way from Atlanta, USA.

“Medical supplies for the other clinics and hospitals are valued at approximately FJ\$8000, which I will distribute in the next few weeks.

Nurse Losana was quite anxious because she received a call from a stranger, thousands of miles away in the USA promising to bring her medical supplies.

Her anxiety is understandable because patients at her clinic including visitors from overseas leave with promises that were never fulfilled.

“We are not her patients so it was only natural for her to be anxious. Her anxiety turned to wide-eyed smiles and loving appreciation. She even organised a lovo lunch for us, and we thank her and her village headman, Jona, and his team.

“For us, the most valuable commodity is time. As we know, time is priceless as we cannot wind the clock back. One can spend money and earn it back tomorrow but time cannot come back.”

Ms Sharma said choosing to assist Fiji ‘was natural’ for them.

“My parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were born in Fiji. My heritage is Fiji. I was born in Australia but have been living in the USA. My medical mission began with my grandmother, Sarita Sharma, of Sigatoka.

“She was a social and charitable worker helping at Sigatoka hospital, Crippled Children’s and Red Cross in the 70s and 80s. I was inspired by her good deeds and more so after knowing that she had health issues that

was not treatable in Fiji.

“I had visited Fiji as a younger child and saw that hospitals were in dire need. I could not do anything then. But now I can. And I want to help the country of my heritage.”

And the Sharma family’s generosity does not end here. They have also encouraged family, friends and all those having some tie to Fiji to give a helping hand.

“If each family visiting Fiji can bring even a small donation imagine the volume of medical supplies we would have. I understand not everyone will have access to the kind of access I have from my sponsor, but if a family can get a pair of surgical scissors, a digital thermometer, a pack or two of band aid, and simply take them to a health clinic in the rural area, we would make a small but important step towards a healthy Fiji.

“By publicising this mission, we hope we can reach out to others who would like to help.”

Ms Sharma’s efforts would have been futile, had it not been for assistance from Wellstar Health System in Georgia.

“I really want to thank my donor, Wellstar Health System in Georgia, in particular, David Piotter and Darrell Sharp. Without their support, I would not have been able to bring the amount of medical supplies I brought.

“I want to thank and express our gratitude to Mr Hoffgen, the GM at Mana Island Resort and Spa.”

“Finally, I want to thank the Minister for Health, Dr Neil Sharma, for facilitating the customs clearance through Jonetani Lasaqa of the Ministry of Finance and Mitieli Matavewa, Mr Gounder and Mr Jeremaia of the Ministry of Health.

“In two weeks time I will be distributing medical supplies to health centres along the Coral Coast.

“I thank Mr Peter Hopgood for facilitating us with accommodation at Outrigger on the Lagoon, as he did last year too.”

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