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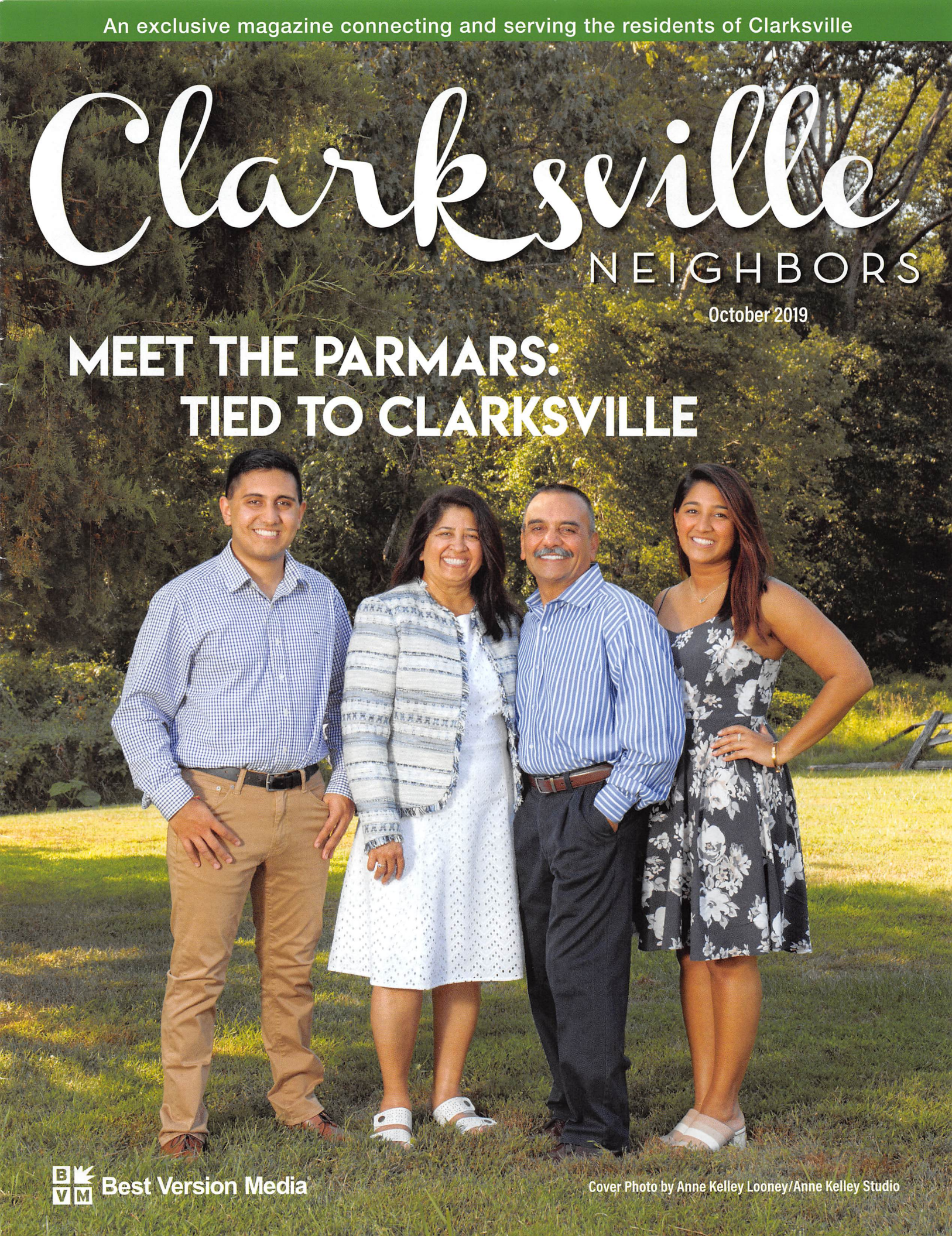
MEET THE PARMARS: TIED TO CLARKSVILLE



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Cover Photo by Anne Kelley Looney/Anne Kelley Studio



MEET THE PARMARS: TIED TO CLARKSVILLE

By Lynne Layug | Professional photography by Anne Kelley Looney/Anne Kelley Studio
additional photos supplied by the featured family

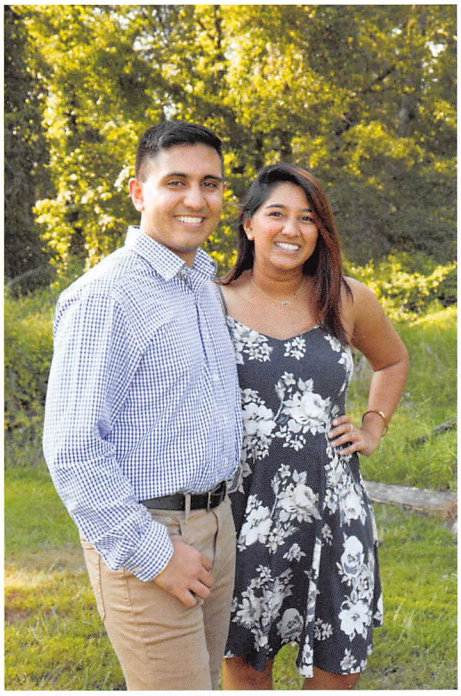
Anyone who has a sibling knows that they are both a blessing and a curse. As children, brothers and sisters tend to be more of the latter—vying for parents' time, attention and affection. As we grow older, we tend to recognize our siblings are one of the greatest blessings in life and many of us come to rely on siblings as our closest friends.

We met the Parmar family at their home on Route 108 as they were celebrating *Raksha Bandhan*, the Hindu festival that highlights the bond between brothers and sisters. Dr. Rashmi Parmar and her husband, Kirit, welcomed their adult children, Puja and Suraj, home for the festival. Both are graduates of River Hill High School and the University of Maryland, College Park. Puja earned bachelor's degrees in both Finance and Operations Management and an MBA from the Johns Hopkins University. She is now working for a healthcare consulting firm in Chicago. Her brother is working for IBM in Raleigh, NC, utilizing his computer science degree.

During the ritual, sisters pray for their brothers and wish them a long and healthy life. "We tie a *rhaki* (ribbon) on our brother's right wrist as a symbol of love and for the welfare of our brother," Puja explainetd. Suraj, added, "The brother then promises to be a protector for her and her family and we give a small gift to our sister." Puja and Suraj were joined by several of their cousins and their newest family member, seven-month old Rudra, who had travelled from Northern VA to join in the traditions.

Despite the beauty and solemnity of the occasion (and despite both being in their mid-twenties) Puja and Suraj still jostled for the better positions during the photo shoot, made faces at each other and each declared themselves to be their parents' favorite! Their good-natured teasing reflects a closeness that develops over time with many shared experiences.

Their mother discussed the family's motto, which reflects the concept of *dharma* in their Hindu faith: "Make



honesty and integrity your foundation and always do the right thing, such that if you ever lose your memory, you will never have to remember or have regrets as you will have always done what you thought was right and just at all times." Rashmi and Kirit modeled these values for their children and perhaps is why the family has such close bonds with each other.

Rashmi and Kirit have been together for almost 40 years, and neither can define a single "best memory." "Our entire journey has been a string of memories that we call life," Rashmi explained, "Tying the knot and taking the plunge with Kirit, trusting absolutely that I will be loved, respected and taken care of. I am blessed and lucky to have all of them fulfilled."

"Kirit and I met in 11th grade and were high school sweethearts," Rashmi said. She was born in Zanzibar, Africa but moved to Bhavnagar, India when she was five years old. Rashmi attended the Ahmedabad Government Dental Institute and earned a Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree while Kirit was completing his degree in mechanical engineering from the LD College of Engineering.

After graduation in 1986, the couple married. "The very next day, I immigrated to the United States, but Kirit couldn't join me until a year later. We survived our first year of love across seven seas!" Rashmi stated. When she came to the United States, Dr. Parmar had to return to dental school in order to practice here. "I started with Georgetown University's dental school, but after my sophomore year, the Board of Directors announced it was closing the dental school so I transferred to the University of Pennsylvania," Rashmi explained. Kirit joined her in Philadelphia and attended Drexel University where he began working on a Master of Science in Precision Engineering degree. Rashmi performed her general dental practice residency at Carolina Medical Center in Charlotte, NC and Kirit completed his master's degree at the University of North Carolina, Charlotte.

Rashmi explained how they ended up in Maryland: "After graduation, we decided to settle in a place where we would like to live and raise a family. We tried South Jersey but it did not





feel like home. We had some friends in Columbia, MD who invited us to check the area out and we fell in love with the community. We moved to the Long Reach Village Center and I started working with Dr. Constance Hughes in Columbia."

In 1991, Dr. James Gainer offered Rashmi an opportunity to build her practice in Clarksville. The practice was open only one a day week and this was while Kirit worked for a Gaithersburg engineering company. The following year, Rashmi bought the practice from Dr. Gainer and moved it to its current location in front of the home that the Parmars had purchased for this purpose.

While Rashmi was getting her practice started, Kirit was starting his own manufacturing company. It was necessary to move this company overseas due to competition so he then purchased a Quick Service Franchisee business which cannot be sent overseas. Kirit owns several Dunkin Donuts and Baskin Robbins franchise locations in and around Howard County, along with multiple other retail businesses including real estate development.

The Parmars enjoy traveling and

reading as well as spending time outdoors. Rashmi appreciates the numerous pathways in Columbia and takes daily walks with friends. "My profession is my passion and my calling," Rashmi stated, "but walking the Columbia paths with my friends is what gets me going every day and keeps me sane!"

Kirit loves to play sports -- tennis, golf, cricket-- but he is also passionate about his motorcycles. Their home has a showroom in the basement containing his prized possessions. - including one that he built from a lawnmower motor and scraps from the Alpha Ridge Landfill.

The couple knows that it takes effort, time and commitment from all to make a community thrive and that it truly takes a village to raise a child. "We are both spiritual people who embrace Hinduism but more importantly, humanity, as our religion," Rashmi said. Rashmi enjoys mentoring high school students interested in dental careers and also volunteers at health fairs and at temples. Kirit is on call with anyone who knows him and is in need. Rashmi joked, "People have him on speed dial for all sorts of emergencies at 1-800-call –Kirit!"



Just as the Parmars observe the *Raksha Bandhan* ritual of pledging love, support and protection to each other, they have done the same with their community. As Clarksville residents for almost 30 years, the Parmar family has strengthened the foundation of our community and they have proven to be wonderful neighbors.



