

Honoring DR. KIRAN FREY

WORDS BY LISA STAMOS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDA M. BARRETT

From India, With Love

DR. KIRAN FREY immigrated to America from her home of India as a young medical student accompanied by a set of core values—the importance of education, building an esteemed career in medicine and mental health care, compassion towards others, and her family’s tradition of charitable giving.

A United States resident since 1975, Kiran’s roles have evolved from medical student to a career in forensic and general psychiatry, to wife, mother, and through her son’s love of the world’s most popular board game—to becoming the Queen of Chess.

“I grew up in the northern part of India,” Kiran said. “Being a British Commonwealth nation when I was a child, there was a rich tradition of education. I attended boarding school and after high school took the standard British Senior Cambridge exam with a focus on pre-med.” The Senior Cambridge examinations were General Certificate of Education examinations held in India and other Commonwealth countries. She says that being a girl was not a hindrance or obstacle to a full education because of the values held by her parents.

Kiran’s father’s family was Eurasian. Her paternal grandfather immigrated to India during the Armenian Genocide (1915-1916) and married a woman of Indian and Welsh descent who had lived in the Himalayan Mountains. They had five children including her father. Her grandfather was a

(Continued next page)



missionary. Her father worked for the British Army, stationed in Eritrea, North Africa, during World War II.

“My mother immigrated to India from Pakistan during the 1947 partition of India which divided India into the separate nations of India and Pakistan,” Kiran said. “India was very cosmopolitan from influences of the British Empire and other earlier invasions such as the Mughals. She was a teacher, and my father started working as a policeman after the British left India.”

A CAREER IN MEDICINE

Kiran was fascinated by biology, the sciences, and human and animal behavior as a young woman. She also had firsthand experience with those facing great health misfortunes. An aunt, who was a U.S.-trained dermatologist, took over challenging health programs in India, such as Leper Asylums. She often brought along Kiran to work alongside her with some of the lepers.

Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease affecting the eyes, skin, and nose causing marked disfigurement of the face and loss of use of the fingers. These patients are bright and chose to live away from their families to not cause any social stigmas on their account. As a young girl, Kiran’s responsibility was to dictate letters for those who lost their fingers from the disease. “This was one of the many ways my family taught me to be charitable to others, very early on. There were so many ways you could make a difference in India,” she said.

Kiran pursued pre-med training at the Christian Medical College in Northern India and completed a psychiatry internship in the large city of Lucknow. At this time, a perfect storm in her field was brewing. A persistent shortage of American physicians following WWII and the increasing demand for healthcare due to a growing post-war U.S. population opened doors for Kiran and her husband Pradip Sethi, who moved here together.

The U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 created opportunities for foreign nationals in the medical field to move to the U.S., and the Indian government recognized this was a good situation for their doctors, thereby allowing them to move abroad. As of 2019, 8.5% of U.S. physicians (939,000) are Indian.

“I thought it would be fun to see the world, and live in a new place,” Kiran said. “Lots of people from our medical school were in the U.S. including a friend from med school who was at Northwestern University and invited us to apply for a residency. My husband is a neurologist and sleep medicine doctor. I ended up at the University of Illinois’ Chicago campus.”

Kiran graduated from the Illinois State Psychiatric Institute in 1979 and worked in her own private practice of General and Forensic Psychiatry for 25 years. Currently, she is affiliated with Ascension Health Services in Arlington Heights. She is a Board-certified psychiatrist from the American Board of Psychiatry & Neurology and a Board-certified Forensic Psychiatrist from the American Board of Forensic Medicine.

CHES WITHOUT BORDERS

Kiran and husband Pradip have three wonderful children. Their oldest daughter is Sheba, who lives in Boston with her husband and 6-year-old twins. Nina, their middle daughter, is a Chicago resident. She and her husband have two young children. Son Rishi owns a technology business in New York.

In 1998, son Rishi won a chess tournament at Grove Elementary School in Barrington. The school’s principal, Dr. Cindy Kalogeropoulos, took notice and encouraged Rishi to teach other students how to play the game. “She was very supportive, and so we started a chess club which eventually was replicated in other Barrington schools,” Kiran said.

Since its inception, the chess club fees collected were donated to a wide variety of charitable causes, both locally and internationally, oftentimes helping impoverished children in other countries start their own chess clubs through donated chess sets and books. In 2006, the club was incorporated as a nonprofit and some of the money raised at chess events was donated to featured charities. This maintained the tradition of raising funds through service learning.

“The children learn chess faster than their parents,” Kiran said of club activity. “From the beginning, the club, now called Chess Without Borders, has been run by the children (with some oversight by the parents especially to manage the funds). To date, the 25 year-strong Chess Without Borders has donated \$221,440 to causes that club members identify and are passionate about.

THE HEART OF SERVICE LEARNING

Chess is a skills-based game that offers key benefits to its young players. The game promotes social interaction, teaches patience, builds confidence, enhances concentration, improves cognitive and problem-solving skills, as well as academic performances in math and reasoning.

Chess Without Borders, under the guidance of Kiran and later (and currently) Chess Grandmaster Dr. Yury Shulman, who moved from New York to Barrington in 2006 to lead the program after Rishi left for college, is more than just a strategic board game.

“Chess is the crucible. Since its inception, the chess club has been run by the students who have become far more culturally, geographically, and economically aware of the world through philanthropy,” Kiran said. “The students are motivated and highly engaged by what they can do to help others in need. The club is a safe, supportive, and social place for them to grow during what are the most formative years for developing their self-esteem. They find skills they have—whether to apply henna, cook meals for tournaments, and more—to raise funds for others in need of help. Barrington 220 has been highly supportive of the chess club’s growth and reach.

Chess Without Borders is a reminder that one person can change the world. In 1998, a local boy, Rishi Sethi, wins a chess tournament at Grove Elementary School in Barrington. His astute and compassionate then-principal, parents, teachers, other students and their parents, a supportive school district, and a world-class chess champion, have carried forward that singular win and collectively turned it into a larger vision.

And Dr. Kiran Frey, that boy’s mom and our own Queen of Chess, strategically made all the right moves to assure that this game, which first emerged in seventh-century India, continues to enlighten and elevate children here and abroad, making our world a better place.

To learn more: The Barrington chess club transformed the efforts of children and supportive adults into an award-winning, youth-based social entrepreneurial center bringing the community together. Visit shulmanchess.com to learn more about the club and opportunities to join.



HERE ARE SOME WORDS THAT OTHERS
SHARED ABOUT DR. KIRAN FREY.

Zein Bertacchi, MENTOR

Kiran and I worked together for the last 25 years developing an innovative chess program combining chess education with service and philanthropy. In 2000, her 11-year-old son, Rishi, had a bright idea when he invited me to serve food at chess events. Soon Kiran and Rishi assembled a formidable volunteer force that advanced the mission to support a wide variety of local and global humanitarian ventures. Children were inspired to create unique social entrepreneurial projects to raise funds through chess events.

I feel honored and lucky to have participated in these food adventures that benefited charity. Kiran has the marvelous ability to connect diverse groups of all ages, having fun while keeping the focus on others. Kiran's enthusiasm was irresistible as she spread her love for service and challenged children to reach beyond their potential. Kiran and her students are recognized nationally. She symbolizes the courage, enterprise, initiative, determination, humor, energy, confidence, optimism, and zest of a community that unites us.

Maggie Gruber Black, COLLABORATOR

Kiran is always the one who makes the magic happen! She takes people, often young children, by the hand and empowers them to make a difference in the world, believing that they can effect change and improve the lives of others who are less fortunate. She guides them... and then steps back, allowing the light to shine only on them. Her absolute belief in the efficacy of "social entrepreneurship" and its ability to facilitate positive change leads Kiran to recruit ordinary people and make them leaders.

I was the beneficiary of her vision, worked alongside her, and learned from her. She showed me that an ordinary person could make a difference

in someone's life a half-world away. Kiran's daughter was volunteering in the slums of India and shared with her mother the story of an impoverished, horribly burned little girl named Meher. Kiran made it her business, and mine, to do something about it. She harnessed the energy of the chess clubs in Barrington to raise money and awareness of this child. Through her efforts, a surgeon volunteered to do massive reconstructive surgery on Meher's face and hands. She continued to raise funds to send Meher to a residential school for the next 10 years, which gave Meher an extraordinary opportunity in life. As always, Kiran never took any credit. She is exceptional!



**Volunteers of all ages within Kiran's orbit learn
to Think Bigger. –Sam Oliver**

Sam Oliver, BOARD MEMBER

Volunteers of all ages within Kiran's orbit learn to Think Bigger. She acts with compassion, kindness, and determination both locally and globally and empowers others to accomplish much more than they thought possible. She pays attention to the needs of others and encourages and mentors a wide range of young people and adults in the Barrington area and beyond to open their eyes, minds, and hearts to reach out to address these needs in creative and sustainable ways. No project seems to be beyond her scope of care and concern.

Kiran is an encourager, constantly nominating others for recognition and new experiences and writing extensively to tell their stories. She recognizes possibilities for service projects that many would seem daunting and provides openings for others to step up cooperatively, bringing life-changing programs here and abroad. Kiran is a servant leader—a dynamo.

Carol Schmidt, CHESS CLUB CO-FOUNDER

I met my incredible friend Kiran 20 years ago during a mission trip to Mexico with students from Barrington, while bringing donated soccer equipment and teaching chess to children in an orphanage. Since then, she has continued to amaze and inspire me with her boundless compassion and tireless dedication to improving lives both locally and globally.

Her impact spans countless efforts—from serving at holiday dinners for families of incarcerated individuals in Chicago to helping establish computer, tailoring, and cosmetic training programs in India's slums, empowering individuals toward financial independence. She is also working to raise vital funds to provide refugee families with clothing and household essentials, especially during harsh Chicago winters.

One of her greatest gifts is inspiring youth in our community, nurturing their empathy and volunteerism. She ensures their social entrepreneurship is recognized and celebrated, often by successfully nominating them for the prestigious Presidential Award. Her influence has encouraged many young people to see service as a meaningful and rewarding part of life.

In 2023, she was recognized as a White House Daily Point of Light Honoree, a testament to her dedication, generosity, and leadership. I am endlessly grateful for her friendship.

Yury Shulman, CHESS GRANDMASTER

I am very happy to find out about the project where we can praise Dr. Kiran Frey for her enthusiasm and energy to help others! I met Dr. Kiran Frey in 2001 at a summer chess camp in Whitewater, Wisconsin, where I was one of the teachers. Her son, Rishi, was a young and talented chess player at that time. Four years later, Rishi and Dr. Frey invited me to help to expand Barrington chess program. The program grew quickly to be in almost every school in Barrington. The chess tournaments we were running hosted up to 160 students! Most of the chess clubs were barely able to fit all the students who wished to participate

I am sure hundreds of kids are thankful to her for the paths they choose, thanks to Dr. Frey. I am thankful to her for helping to develop my heart through seeing how caring she can be towards parents and children. Everyone knows her as Kiran. She helped to start Chess Without Borders and was the most active member of the board for more than 15 years. Now she is running another non-profit program which is devoted to a memory of one of our chess teachers and volunteers, Peter Wulff. Kiran, we always appreciate all your love, help, care, and friendship which you shine those around you.


Peggy and John Schwartz, VOLUNTEER LEADERS

Dr. Kiran Frey's unwavering dedication has made her an invaluable pillar of the Barrington community. For over 13 years, we've witnessed first-hand her extraordinary impact through Chess Without Borders, a youth volunteer program she single-handedly built into a thriving success. More than just a program, it is a testament to Dr. Frey's commitment to young people, outstanding leadership, and boundless passion. Year after year, she and her team of young volunteers orchestrated engaging fundraisers and events as well as Saturday gatherings, meticulously handling every detail from advertising and concessions to gathering volunteers to work at the events creating a welcoming and enjoyable environment for hundreds of students and their families. All the money raised at the events went to international and local charities, as well as partnerships with world organizations.

Dr. Frey's magic lies in her ability to instill the power of volunteerism in young minds, nurturing their character and propelling them toward new opportunities. Our son benefited immensely, earning nominations to local and international assemblies thanks to his involvement in Chess Without Borders. Moreover, the program has proven to be a springboard for academic success, with many students, including our son, securing scholarships and admission to esteemed universities as a direct result of Dr. Frey's tireless dedication. She is the very definition of a Quintessential Person.

Sage Schwartz, FORMER STUDENT

My family and I were introduced to Kiran and Chess Without Borders when I was in middle school. Working alongside her, we were introduced to all the different local and international charities she was involved in. What impressed me most was her dedication to these causes in the long term. Through our years working with Kiran, we would regularly get updates from the causes we worked for, especially regarding Meher, a young girl burned by mosquito netting, and the construction of a computer center in Delhi, India.



Chapters
LIVING

Experience the Chapters Living Difference

At Chapters, we deliver customized experiences and care for our residents. We build trust through transparency and understand the unique needs of your loved one.

Now accepting new residents!

510 W. Northwest Highway, Barrington, IL
224-468-1015
chaptersliving.com/barrington



Our 2025 Who's Who in Health & Wellness | Special Ad Section

QUINTESSENTIAL
BARRINGTON®
January/February 2025

"Dr. Aggie"
Aggie Iwaszczyszyn, DMD
Hart Dental

The well-being of my patients is always forefront in my mind

Inside:
My Top Dental Recommendations to Parents for Their Child's Dental Health

Our 2025 Who's Who in Health & Wellness guide is available year-round @ QBarrington.com

THE KING OF SPORTS

Corporate Sponsorships Are Now Open for the 2025 LeCompte Kalaway Polo Matches



Want to reach affluent families
in and around Barrington?

Sponsor the Midwest's most popular and
largest single polo event!

***The LeCompte Kalaway Cup Polo Matches
Saturday, Sept. 6, 2025 in Barrington Hills***

The most important date on the Barrington area social calendar delivers a blue-chip audience of wealthy homeowners and high-net-worth individuals. Due to increasing demand, we are opening sponsor positions now!

- A limited number of high visibility sponsorships for 2025!
- 2024 was totally sold out!
- Sponsorships include a field-side pavilion to meet prospects, entertain clients, display your wares and services!
- Plus full color ads in our glossy Game Day Magazine!
- And commercial announcements all day over our PA system!

**For more information, contact John Rosene at
847-791-2910 or jrosene@lydiamarketing.com**

**QUINTESSENTIAL
BARRINGTON**

Official Media Sponsor of the LeCompte Kalaway Polo Matches Since 2006

In addition to working in the kitchens and selling food for the chess tournaments, we had the privilege to know Kiran on a personal level. She has clearly passed her intelligence, creativity, and compassion to her children. Kiran has had a great impact on my life and my family, connecting us to different parts of our community and inspiring us to reach out and improve the world around us.

Jack Weed, YOUTH LEADER

I'm a 6th-grader at Prairie Middle School in Barrington. I met Dr. Kiran Frey at a Chess Without Borders tournament. She was raising money to help others, and we quickly became friends. Soon, she became my mentor, and her guidance has been super important in my journey to make a difference.

Dr. Frey talks about how important it is to make a real impact. Because of her, I've been able to help with lots of projects. I supported a mission trip for children of Korean War Veterans and collected coats, hats, and toys for an annual holiday luncheon for ex-prisoners in Chicago. I even served a meal there!

As a Youth Leader at the Peter Wulff Center, and with Dr. Frey's help, we raised money for computers for children living in the Govind Puri slums in Delhi, India. This is the project I'm most proud of. These computers are now part of a computer education center run by Project Why, helping 188 low-income students. I can't wait to raise more money for this, as every kid should have access to a computer.

Dr. Frey's mentorship has not only guided me through these projects but also taught me the values of empathy, hard work, and perseverance. My

efforts even earned me the President's Volunteer Service Award. Her belief in me has given me the confidence to keep going and make a positive impact. I'm grateful to Dr. Frey.

Marion and Bob Wulff

We have known Dr. Kiran Frey for many years. Initially, Bob taught Sunday School with Kiran at Barrington United Methodist Church. Kiran's grandfather was one of the first Christian missionaries to be stationed in India.

For years we watched Dr. Kiran Frey devote herself to charitable activities. The Saturday Chess Tournaments were well attended by students and parents. Snacks were sold at the tournaments, and the proceeds went to worthwhile charities. It was inspiring to watch the students develop into remarkably kind and philanthropic people, along with mastering their skills in chess.

Another project Kiran undertook was her participation in the annual Christmas luncheon for ex-offenders. Many of these people have various struggles, yet Kiran with her sweet, respectful enthusiasm always make everyone feel special and appreciated.

Project Why in India is a skill development program offered to young girls and women providing classes in tailoring and beauty culture. This rigorous training enables the participants to develop professional skills to support a livelihood for themselves and their families. Kiran is the backbone of this important work. She is truly the most modest and generous person. 