

# Here & Now



## Daughter is the spice of mom's life

**Monday, June 14, 2010, 5:16 p.m.** — Gayatri Borthakur (left), 46, owner of Curry's Signature Spices, works her spice booth with her daughter Sujata, 17, at the English Rows Town Centre Farmers Market in Naperville.

**Gayatri:** "I was working at UIC as a full-time researcher and also I was teaching there for undergraduate students. Then in 2007 the turning point came. I always wanted to give (Sujata) some time — actually I used to feel guilty about that like I'm not giving my time to my only child. Then I thought this teenage girl needs me more than my laboratory. So, I said like 'OK, now it is the time for me to decide this or that.' I quit my job. Otherwise I will

always regret, and I never get any time to make it up. Once she leaves the home she leaves for good — forever. So, I just quit my job in 2007, July and believe me I never regretted for doing so.

"That's my vision, to give the authentic Indian flavor to the common people because they may not know. When they go to an Indian restaurant they taste the different dishes and it is totally different than when they buy the spices in the stores and then they try to make it at home. It is totally different because the spice is the main ingredient in our Indian dishes. The store-bought (ones) are made a long time ago, it has been sitting on the shelves and the packaging may not be appropriate to retain the flavor

components of the spices. ... Immediately they open my jars and they see, 'Oh, wow. It is wonderful.' It is very strong and intense and that gives the real flavor to your dish when you make it."

**Sujata:** "I just graduated high school three weeks ago, and I'm going to college in the fall at UIC (for pre-med). And I'm just helping my mom for the summer, having fun. I've been helping her since this whole thing started and supporting her and everything. I had homework and everything so I didn't have too much time, but in the summer now, I have full time devoted to this."

**Gayatri:** "She is encouraging me all the way: 'Mommy, did

you do this? Mommy, you were not working on it for long,' she reminds me (laughs). She looks up my accounts and all my invoices and expenditures."

**Sujata:** "I learned about money management from this, so that was helpful. ... I love Indian food, I would say it's my home food, and I've always wondered how she does it. I have no inkling on how to cook Indian food. I bake sometimes. So I learn from her making spices and everything. From that I just got drawn into the process. I always see her working on something related to the business so I'm like, 'huh, maybe I'll work on this and help her with this.' And after that I just got into it."

**Gayatri:** "She's also learning our folklores, because while I'm doing it, I sometimes say her granny's stories, her great-granny's stories and then our traditional stories. ... I think I made up everything that I missed when I was working full time. Also as a mother if you don't get the time to talk with your children I feel like you miss to teach very important aspects of your life altogether. And I believe Mother is the first place to learn everything for a child. So, I'm getting this chance now."

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