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The Poplis work together to carefully stack the Fateh Care groceries into the back of their car. (Jane Skrypnek/News Staff)

## Family spreads spirit of giving

Jane Skrypnek  
News Staff

On a warm Wednesday morning in July, the Popli family of four excitedly piles into their SUV, bound for Wholesale Club in Esquimalt.

It's a grocery run that's become routine for the Poplis since May when they committed to hand-delivering free groceries to Greater Victoria residents in need.

Fateh Care, as they've named their charity, is devoted to providing support in whatever way possible to anyone who is in true need. Fateh, Harjas Singh Popli explains, is a Sikh word meaning winning or victory. So Fateh Care is like winning hearts by caring, he says.

Groceries are the most common request.

Arriving at the store, Harjas whips out a piece of loose leaf and reviews his orders. On any given day he'll

deliver food to three to four people around the region. This day he has five on his list, all with various dietary restrictions.

Satisfied he knows what he's after, Harjas grabs a cart and heads inside. Behind him, Navneet Kaur Popli and their two sons, Mansahaj Singh Popli, 16, and Manarap Singh Popli, 12, wheel a second cart, which they'll devote to the family's personal groceries.

It's a well-oiled operation. Harjas zips up and down isles and grabs armfuls of fruits, breads and snacks with an efficiency and surety that speaks to the 19 years he spent managing human resources in India. His youngest, Manarap, makes a suggestion here or there, but Harjas has the final say.

Since arriving in Canada just over a year ago, Harjas has started working with Chardikla Time TV and Khalsa Schools of BC, but his

only income comes from Canada's monthly recovery benefit. Navneet is an associate professor of software engineering at the University of Victoria. Still, the couple always devotes at least 10 per cent of their income – as dictated by a Sikh principle called dasvandh – to Fateh Care. While it's getting off the ground, they are giving even more.

"That's how life is," Harjas says. "Sometimes you have a lot of money. Sometimes you get government grants to survive yourself. That's OK. This too shall pass."

Arriving at the till, Harjas pays for the Fateh Care groceries out of one bank account and their personal ones out of another. He is meticulous about keeping the two separate and tracks every Fateh Care purchase and delivery in an Excel spreadsheet – something he notes he's quite skilled at.

Continued A7

## CRD looks to resume shipping biosolids

Jake Romphf  
News Staff

Greater Victoria will likely resume sending its dried Class A biosolids – a dried, granular-pellet byproduct of treated wastewater – to the mainland by the end of summer.

Larisa Hutcheson, the Capital Regional District's parks and environmental services general manager, told board members July 14 it'll be about a month before the residuals treatment facility can sieve the region's pellets down to the size where the Lafarge cement plant will accept them.

The biosolids have been used by the Richmond facility as an alternative to coal in fueling manufacturing, which adheres to the provincial requirement for treated waste from the CRD to have a "beneficial use."

At the board meeting, directors unanimously approved the first two recommendations of a motion. The first was that the CRD support and facilitate the Township of Esquimalt's feasibility study on using gasification to dispose of solid waste and kitchen scraps, and secondly, that this process be used "to test biosolids in the gasification process as an option of the final step in the final stage of biosolids" for the region.

Continued A5

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# Giving provides sense of deep satisfaction

Continued A1

Back at the car, it's a game of Tetris. The four pile the Fateh Care goods into the back in such a way that they can easily be seen and chosen from by the people they are delivering to. It's like a little market stand on wheels.

With no room left for their own groceries, Mansahaj and Manarap load the goods onto the floor of the back seats and tuck their legs up to avoid stepping on them. This, they say, is all part of the fun.

They, like their parents, say they get a deep satisfaction out of bringing a smile to other people's faces.

Once, a woman in Langford asked Harjas to help get a table to her. He refused payment, but the woman saw a banner on their SUV opposing school music cuts and she insisted that she gift the family with an electric guitar.

"And now, the entire day he (Mansahaj) is playing guitar," Navneet says with pride.

When the Poplis discovered one of their neighbours had cancer, they insisted on mowing their lawn every time they did their own. Again they refused payment, and now each time Mansahaj and Manarap go over to mow, the neighbours give them a homemade goodie in thanks.

Giving, the Poplis insist, begets giving.

As they make their deliveries, it's clear some people feel nervous or ashamed accepting the free groceries.

"Sometimes they're a bit shy," Manarap says sagely.

But the Poplis have been in these people's shoes. When they first arrived from India they were living in Calgary with no income and no support system.

"We ourselves used to go to food banks," Navneet says. "Yeah," Harjas adds, "we know the importance of getting food wherever you can get it."

They moved to Saanich in October when Navneet got her teaching position. Then, on the one-year anniversary of their arrival in Canada, the entire family contracted COVID-19. Alone and confined to their home, knowing no one who could help them, the Poplis began hatching their idea for Fateh Care.

Back in India, Navneet's father died from COVID-19 and suddenly the family knew they had to do some-



Harjas Singh Popli loads a conveyor belt with groceries to be donated to five different Greater Victoria residents in need July 7. (Jane Skrypnek/News Staff)

thing to create some good in the world.

"People have to come forward to help other people. That is what humanity is all about," Navneet says, noting that the government will only do so much.

The feeling you get from giving is one you can only appreciate first hand, Harjas says. If people can donate that's wonderful, but if they can't Harjas encourages them to give some of their time. "Everybody can do their

part. Even small things like helping your neighbours or someone in need can make a lot of difference in this world," he says.

Near the end of their four-hour delivery run, Navneet offers everyone a piece of chocolate to tide them over until a late lunch.

"No, no," Harjas says. "I have all the energy I need, trust me. This is feeding me."

More information about Fateh Care can be found at fatehcare.com.

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