

# METRO AND STATE NEWS

## Mystery solved

A medical examiner has ruled on the cause of deaths of a couple at a San Antonio truck stop

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DELICIA LOPEZ/STAFF

Dr. Saritha Chary-Reddy provides braces for free to one child a year from Big Brothers Big Sisters, on one condition: that the family keep all appointments.

## Orthodontist brings smiles to kids, parents

She's a godsend for families that can't afford treatment.

BY VINCENT T. DAVIS  
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The first thing Dr. Saritha Chary-Reddy noticed was that the young girl didn't smile.

She could see that the preteen seemed shy and self-conscious. The youngsters who visit her office react the same way — at first. Months later it's always a different case.

Chary-Reddy, an orthodontist, saw Marissa on a segment of "Jen's Kids" on WOAI-TV on July 7, 2005, that featured youngsters seeking a mentor through Big Brothers Big Sisters of South Texas.

She wanted to volunteer as a big sister but couldn't because of her busy work schedule. But there was something she could do. Stirred by the piece, she called the agency the next day, offering to provide braces for Marissa and free orthodontic treatment. She pledged to do the same for a child from the non-

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## Doctor sponsors a lot of smiles

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profit each year. Her only stipulation — that clients never miss appointments.

"So many people helped me, so I need to help someone else," Chary-Reddy said from her North Side office. "God gave me good skills to use and improve someone's life."

Dorothy Ortiz made sure her daughter met all of Chary-Reddy's requirements. They never missed an appointment.

When they arrived for her first appointment, Chary-Reddy explained the long process to Marissa's mother. Both mother and daughter expected she would bring up a hidden cost.

Chary-Reddy reiterated that the treatment was free.

"Her mother's tears of gratitude were payment enough," Chary-Reddy said. "There are a lot of parents who want to give their children the best but can't afford to. It means a lot coming from a family who feel something good is being done for them."

Beyond the exam rooms is Chary-Reddy's office, where she keeps "before" and "after" pictures of her patients on her computer. She knows each one by heart. She even knows the ca-

### DR. SARITHA CHARY-REDDY

- Received Ph.D. in genetics from Osmania University in Hyderabad, India.
- Dental degree from University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry.
- Completed three-year specialty training in Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

reers they dream of pursuing.

Marissa dreams of becoming a veterinarian.

In her first photo her head is bowed, with a slight smile. In her latest picture she's wide-eyed and bearing a wide grin.

"I'm happy she did it," Marissa said. "In the future she'll be able to help someone else with their smiles."

The change in Marissa's smile and outlook was immediate, her mother said.

"We had no insurance so it came at a time when needed," Ortiz said. "To know there are people willing to go that far is wonderful. She's providing a great service to the community."

Chary-Reddy selects patients after reviewing a list of cases from Big Brothers Big Sisters, specifically looking for function and aesthetics problems. She'll choose her third patient in Feb-

ruary

She chose 11-year-old Charlie as her second client. Charlie, one-third of a set of triplets, had crooked teeth that bothered him. His mother, Elsa Garcia, a single mother, has paid for three of everything since they were born.

"This is the best Christmas present a mom could ever have," Garcia said at Chary-Reddy's office Tuesday afternoon. "This is a wonderful thing to happen for me and Charlie. He literally jumped up and down when I told him."

He watched videos in Chary-Reddy's waiting room before his appointment to have his braces tightened. He pointed out that he wasn't wearing just any braces.

These were light-green and red — the perfect color for a season of giving.

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