



# BEACON



BEACH BIZ

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**life lines**

## CAREGIVER, 29, HERALDED AS ONE 'WHO GIVES HIS LIFE SELFLESSLY'

**By Sandra J. Pennecke**  
Correspondent

**LYNNHAVEN**

There's a special place in heaven for 29-year-old Nitin Samtani.

The Caregiver's Voice, an online community dedicated to supporting those who help others, named Samtani its "Caregiver of the Month" in May.

He has been taking care of his mother, Sushma, since

she suffered a stroke 16 years ago. His cousin Hemant Wadhwanji nominated him for the caregiver honor.

"He's sacrificed his whole life," Wadhwanji said, "and is symbolic of someone in our younger generation – who are often referred to as The Me Generation – who gives his life selflessly."

Samtani recalls the day when his family's life

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SANDRA J. PENNECKE

Nitin Samtani, 29, has been his mother Sushma's caregiver since she suffered a stroke 16 years ago. He was named "Caregiver of the Month" in May by The Caregiver's Voice, an online site dedicated to caregivers.

### SMARTPHONE APP



ABOVE: COURTESY OF VIRGINIA BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY. BELOW: RUTH MOON | THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT

This 1949 postcard is used in the Tagwhat application to give users more information about history of the Boardwalk.

## City history at your fingertip

An online application called Tagwhat allows users to point their smartphone at a spot in Virginia Beach and find out background and historical information.

**By Ruth Moon | The Virginian-Pilot**

**P**icture this:

You're sand-covered and sunburnt, feet in the ocean at 17th Street. You get a sudden urge to know more about the scanty clothing covering those around you – some well, some not so well. So you reach for your phone.

Swimsuit history on Virginia Beach? Yep, there's an app for that.

According to an online smartphone

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# CAREGIVER

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changed forever. Just 13 years old at the time, he was in bed on a school night when he heard his father, Murl, yell for him.

"My mom was lying on the floor, and we thought she'd fallen off a chair, because she was reaching up for something in a closet," said Sam-

tani, who lives the Princess Anne Plaza area.

His mother, only 48 years old at the time, was rushed to the hospital. The family learned that she had suffered a stroke and was paralyzed on her right side, from her mouth down.

After rehabilitation and three months in the hospital, she went home but required 24-hour care and was unable to speak or walk.

Samtani learned how to assist with every aspect of his mother's daily care — medication, feeding, exercising, communication, using the toilet and more.

When he returned to Lynnhaven Middle School that fall, the family paid for someone to care for his mother during the day.

"It was a lot of pressure," Samtani said. "I didn't tell a lot of people."

Samtani also kept mostly to himself because he was too busy taking care of his mother.

Although he had a few friends in the neighborhood, he sacrificed after-school activities, prom, vacations, jobs and most of his social life.

"I felt like a baby, but here I am taking care of my mother," said Samtani, who also took care of his late grandmother when she lived with the family until her death.

Samtani went on to graduate from First Colonial High School in 1999 and commuted to Old Dominion University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in finance with a minor in economics in 2003.

Not only does Samtani take care of his mother, three years ago he fought to get her Medicaid and won. That enabled the family to hire a helper. But Samtani remains his mother's full-time caregiver.

"People say that life is going by, that I'm losing my youth and I'll regret it," Samtani said. "Sometimes I ask myself if this is really reality, but this is an epic journey. I have a good mom."

And although she can't say it, the gentle touch Sushma Samtani uses to hold her son's hand seems to express that she knows — she has raised a good son.

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# TAGWHAT

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application called Tagwhat, swimsuits in the early 1900s were tailor-made. And in the 1930s, a local seamstress made suits for the Virginia Beach Lifesaving Service every season.

Tagwhat is a location-based app for people with smartphones that have Internet or 3G network service. Open the program, tap "use current location" on the menu bar and a view-finder-type screen pops up that shows your surroundings with tags linking to photos and stories of nearby areas.

A GPS map on the bottom left side of the screen highlights stories as red dots, so you can walk to different areas to find them.

The app currently features nine fairly large cities across the U.S., such as Portland, Ore.; Boulder, Colo.; Austin, Texas; and, of course, Virginia Beach.

Freelance writers and Tagwhat employees created most of the stories for each city, said Dave Elchoff, CEO and cofounder of Tagwhat. Nicole McGee, Virginia Beach's emerging technologies librarian, and Cynthia Hart, the virtual librarian, took over the task for Virginia Beach.

"The library's kind of like an iceberg; we have all this cool stuff that nobody ever sees or knows how to get to," Hart said. "What we're trying to do now is tell people, and we're using this augmented reality app to do it."

Librarians actively collect memorabilia and stories from local residents. Some of the stored information turned into a coffee-table book about local history ("The Beach," available for \$8.95 at local libraries), and Hart is turning more into interactive stories on Tagwhat. She has a list of about 100 stories to create for the app, and the library has 10 stories posted now, she said.

You can click on a story about the annual Pungo strawberry festival and a story about a movie scene from "Hearts of Atlantis"

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## VET'S NOTES

Richard Dailey, D.V.M.

### DOGS AND THUNDER

Some dogs panic in a thunderstorm. Though the cause of this terror is unknown, there are a few theories. Some blame the barometric pressure change combined with noise and wind. Others speculate that the accumulated static electricity during storms shocks the dog. Whatever the reason, storm panic is real and can be hard to treat. Watch where the dog likes to hide during a storm, and make sure that room is accessible. Try playing soothing music and leaving a crate open as a safe place. Consider special tight-fitting security shirts meant to soothe panicked animals. Whatever happens, never scold the dog for being afraid. Talk with the vet about the possibility of using anti-anxiety medication during a storm.

P.S. Some owners try desensitizing their dogs by gradually introducing soundtracks of thunderstorms.

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