

Twenty years ago, Sivaram 'Ram' Maratha landed at Bluegrass Airport from India to begin his Masters in Epidemiology at Eastern Kentucky University. Knowing not a soul, he fell to the mercy of a stranger at the airport, a woman, who drove him to Richmond. Upon arrival, a few days before classes began, the kind woman stopped at the Administration Building and told Ram to wait in the car. She returned shortly and directed Ram to go inside where he learned a room had been secured for him. After completing his Master's, he accepted a position with the Department for Public Health in Frankfort. Mercy again followed Ram. He didn't drive, so DPH staff took turns for months picking him up from and delivering him back to a Richmond Hardees. They soon taught him how to drive.

Ram found his way, on his own, to the Division of Women's Health. For the past 16 years, Ram has been KDPH's Women's Cancer Screening Program's biggest champion. He IS the breast and cervical cancer screening program! All LHDs know his name. He's even well-known nationally, a star at the annual CDC conferences. His passion for data is evident every day as he strives for everyone to receive timely screening and a complete follow-up, both potentially lifesaving. Ram develops county GIS maps identifying areas throughout the state with low screening rates that are shared with the program's contractors and/or the state's cancer control partners. He believes this data-driven targeted approach can improve the lives of the people we serve. As a team player, Ram collaborates extensively by sharing data from and with Local Health Departments, Medicaid, Federal Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, the KY Cancer Registry, and all our partners, to monitor and analyze the quality of BCC care and data integrity. Ram's flexibility and positivity was instrumental during public health transformation, as he embraced change and took the lead on training our new community health system partners on the program's data requirements.

When the unprecedented the COVID pandemic came to Kentucky, Ram's unique skills and expertise were requested by the Commissioner's office to develop a GIS map to show the spread of COVID cases. His maps were the face of the COVID pandemic, posted on the COVID website, shown on the evening news, and featured in state newspapers. Most importantly, his maps (data) were utilized during the Governor's daily press conferences. After each daily press conference, Ram started the process all over again for the next day, working nights and weekends to make sure the data was accurate and timely. This task grew to include additional maps identifying deaths, hospitalizations, labs, and COVID testing sites across the Commonwealth. Over many months, as COVID surged through the state, Ram grew concerned about the plummeting KWCSF screening numbers. He felt he needed to focus on encouraging women to return to life-saving screenings, so he made the decision to train other epidemiologists to compile the daily COVID data and took a backseat on the daily press briefing project.

However, the requests for his expertise kept coming, and Ram accepted them all, humbly stating that each request allows him to learn something new that will help the program. Again, the Administration requested another map, providing a more defined demographic breakdown of the COVID impact throughout the state; another to provide evaluation for the COVID-19 Diversity Data Workgroup Report addressing the state's disparities and inequities in African-American and Latinx communities; and another, a zip code map to identify and measure the effectiveness of an outreach campaign for minority populations. He completed all of this while maintaining his KWCSF responsibilities.

Recently, Ram singlehandedly enhanced the program's data collection process when the state's data vendor transitioned to a new web-based system. Every hard edit, every system change, every feedback report he developed had the user and/or the patient in mind. His QA efforts will ensure that every person receiving

breast and/or cervical cancer screening services receives a complete cycle of care – meaning all abnormal test results include a complete follow-up.

Ram provides encouragement and recognition to everyone he works with. His positive attitude, coupled with his immense thoughtfulness and kindness, make him a major team player, who never says, 'no'. But don't tell anybody. The state is fortunate that Ram found his way here, to KDPH, and chose Women's Health as his calling. Ram speaks only of one regret in the past twenty years, never learning the name of that woman at the airport who showed him such mercy.