

Mageshry Pillay

In May of 2013, our family gained a new member. Mageshry Pillay joined us from Durban, South Africa to take care of our two children, Erik (now 9) and Morgan (now 7). I'm not sure that it would be possible to put into words the impact she has had on our family, but if anyone deserves Au Pair of the Year, it's Mageshry.

About two years ago, our lives drastically changed. I had just returned to work after years of being a stay-at-home-mom, and been accepted to an accelerated nursing degree program. My husband's new job required he travel for the majority of the week. Additionally, our son Erik was diagnosed with an anxiety disorder, which was having a negative impact on his academic and social life. We needed help, beyond what a babysitter or the average nanny could provide. In stepped Mageshry, bringing her bubbly and cheerful attitude, patient and caring personality, and her complete dedication to providing the highest level of care and support to our children. Not only has she had a major positive impact on my children, she's enabled me to return to my career and education, confident in the knowledge that my children are in the best possible hands.

I trust Mageshry completely. She has taken over running the children's schedules, making sure they are on time and prepared for after school activities, sports and dance classes. She even coached Erik's soccer team last year! She needs remarkably little oversight to make sure that the children's lives outside of school are running smoothly.

Her positive impact on the children's after-school activities pales in comparison to the success Erik and Morgan have had in school since she arrived. Education is clearly one of Mageshry's passions. Erik and Morgan have made significant academic improvements under Mageshry's tutelage. Because of her, they are now on or above grade level in all subjects. Morgan's reading especially is impressive – she is a clear and confident reader now, due to the hard work Mageshry has put in during homework time. Mageshry has adapted her own schedule to Erik's inclination to wake up with the sun, tutoring him before school as well as after, ensuring he doesn't get burned out after school. Mageshry's love of learning has not only benefited Erik and Morgan. Last year she volunteered as a reading tutor at our local public school, giving her own time to help others in our community succeed. For an entire school year, Mageshry worked weekly one-on-one with the same student, creating a measurable impact in that student's reading ability.

Mageshry makes sure that Erik and Morgan keep learning outside of school and homework. On her own, she's taken them on trips to the Crayola factory and into nearby Washington, DC. Her summers here have been full of trips and activities to keep the children learning, active, and engaging with other children, something particularly important in light of Erik's personality. They were frequent visitors to local parks, pools, nature centers, the zoo, cultural events – the list goes on and on! Morgan and Erik are both strong swimmers now, almost entirely thanks to Mageshry. The time they spend with Mageshry is always time well spent – there was no wasting away the summer in front of the television!

In addition to last year's volunteer tutoring work, Mageshry currently volunteers with the OneUmbrella Foundation in DC, distributing food to those in need. This not only speaks volumes about Mageshry's altruistic and giving nature, but also provides an excellent example for Erik and Morgan. It has enabled her to really get to know Washington, DC and form bonds with her fellow volunteers as well as the people in the communities they serve. She was quick to adapt to DC's metro system, as well as driving on the other side of the road!

Hard work is not the only area where Mageshry excels – she's excellent at having fun as well! She has accompanied us on trips to visit extended family, amusement parks, and the beach, including a 10-day trip to Florida last year. Mageshry has ensured that the kids have a fantastic time, while allowing

us some downtime. Vacations are easier and better for all of us with Mageshry. I know that in her time off, she's made the most of her time in the US, traveling to New York City and other nearby cities, and has formed tight bonds with the other au pairs, helping newer au pairs adjust to life in the United States.

I simply cannot say enough good things about Mageshry. She quickly and completely integrated into our lives, and has truly become a member of the family. Not only has she changed my family's lives for the better, she devotes her down time to improving the lives of others. My children are happy, well-cared for, and excelling academically, and my husband and I have peace of mind when they're in her care. She's had a profoundly positive permanent impact in our lives. We are going to miss her dreadfully when she's gone, but I am sure she is destined for great things.