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were mailed coupons, and others got a gift card for a website collecting donations for classrooms in need — DonorsChoose.org. Norton found that the DonorsChoose.org group not only returned to Crate & Barrel’s website slightly sooner than the other group, but also that they gave the company much higher marks when surveyed on statements like “Crate & Barrel is a company that reflects my values.”

**Ritual, he discovered, also has its rewards.**

Norton dubbed another area of study the “Ikea effect.” He has found that people value the fruits of their own labor — even when that means merely putting together some-assembly-required furniture — more highly than things that come ready to use. “People have horrible artwork in their houses that they made themselves, and they thought it was amazing,” he says, “[but it’s] very, very meaningful to them.” Encouraging people to invest their own labor pays off in happiness.

Ritual, he discovered, also has its rewards. In one study, half the participants were given a chocolate bar to eat however they liked. The other half were told to unwrap the bar and break it in a ritualized way. The ritualists reported that the chocolate tasted better, and they savored it for a longer time. The effect persisted even when the chocolate was replaced with carrots.

Norton’s work over the years has been wide-ranging. While much of his recent work has centered on ways to improve daily life, he also investigates wealth and income inequality.

“Some people criticize social science and say that we observe what’s wrong and merely talk about it,” he says. But it doesn’t have to stop there. The work on daily-life interventions that he and his colleagues are doing is “interesting in its own right, but it has direct practical implications,” he says. “It’s also super-fun.” ♦ *By Graham Meyer ’01*

**WATCH:** A TED talk on money and happiness by Michael Norton \*02 at [paw.princeton.edu](http://paw.princeton.edu)



Shetal Shah '96 pushed for the passage of legislation that benefits some 240,000 babies born each year in New York State.

PROFILE: SHETAL SHAH '96

**PROTECTING BABIES BY VACCINATING PARENTS**

**Opportunity seized** During his neonatology fellowship, Shetal Shah '96 was called to the emergency room to treat a baby who had contracted influenza, which can be deadly in babies under 6 months of age. Shah recognized the infant as one who had been cared for previously in his neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). “We spend so much time, money, and human resources to get prematurely born babies well enough to leave the hospital, only to have them come back because of the flu,” he says.

**RÉSUMÉ**  
**Neonatologist and researcher at the Maria Fareri Children’s Hospital of New York Medical College in Valhalla, N.Y. Majored in ecology and evolutionary biology.**

**Immunizing the adults** That experience led Shah to take a leading role in boosting immunization of parents with babies in the NICU. Newborns are too young to be given the flu vaccine. But vaccinating those parents was no small feat. “Doing anything to parents is not considered to be within the scope of the neonatologist,” says Shah. Thanks to his perseverance and several research studies, the

American Academy of Pediatrics now encourages hospitals to give all parents the influenza and whooping cough vaccines. Shah advocated successfully for state laws that require New York hospitals to offer these vaccines to all parents (and other caregivers) with newborns in the NICU. While the laws are specific to NICU infants, Shah says most New York hospitals extend the vaccination programs to parents of all newborns.

**Beyond influenza** Shah is about to start a program at his hospital to screen new mothers of premature infants for postpartum depression. A pilot pneumococcal-vaccination program also is in the works for parents of NICU babies. Today, he says, “there is more understanding that we need to do whatever we can to promote the health of newborns.” ♦ *By Anna Azvolinsky \*09*

Michael Falco/Black Star