

## Neighbors

### *Focusing on the state's Indian community*

*Local Realtor is the publisher of CT Indian Life*

by Nancy Thompson

There is a vibrant and growing Indian community in this part of the state, but until recently, Indians had no publication dedicated to their lives, interests and activities.

That changed last year, when Madhu Reddy, a local Realtor and Sujata Srinivasan, a freelance writer from Manchester, teamed up to publish CT Indian Life.

The free monthly newsmagazine is available throughout the state at nearly 100 restaurants, grocery stores and other places where Indians gather.

"The concept came from your papers," Mr. Reddy said, referring to LIFE Publications' 13 local monthly newsmagazines. "We want to be community-centric."

He said there is a large Indian population in and around Glastonbury and Hartford and in New Haven and New London counties. "Glastonbury is attractive because of its good school district," he said. "That's important to Indians."

East Hartford and Manchester, especially the Buckland area, also have a large Indian community. Mr. Reddy said some apartment complexes in those towns are 80 to 90 percent Indian.

"We felt we needed a paper for community needs. We focus on people, the community, what's happening and health issues," he said. "We promote festivals and dance recitals and tell what's going on in the neighborhood."

The staff, which includes a graphic designer, a webmaster and an editor for children's features, along with several freelance writers, has no office, although Mr. Reddy said that may change "at a certain point."

He said the publication started with a traditional newspaper format but changed earlier this year to a stapled, magazine format. The October issue was the first to be printed in color.

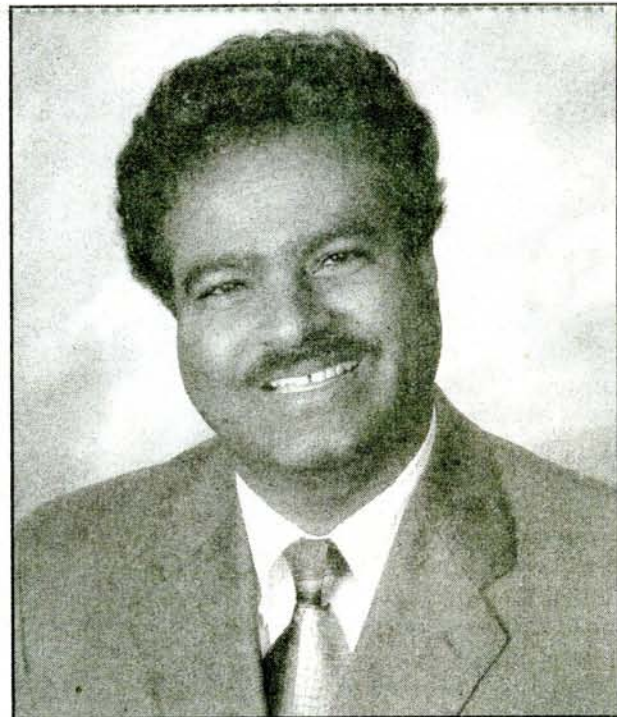
For Mr. Reddy, a realtor with the local office of William Raveis Real Estate, Mortgage and Insurance, being a publisher is a long-held dream.

"I always had a passion to do a community paper, even before I became a realtor," he said. "When I met Sujata, it just came together. She's the journalism person, and I'm the business person."

Mr. Reddy grew up in India and has been in Connecticut for almost 20 years. He worked for Eastern Connecticut State University as an information technology specialist and moved to Glastonbury seven years ago.

Ms. Srinivasan, who has been working on a project in India, said CT Indian Life was launched to fill a void. "Indian-Americans in the state did not have a publication of their own, although there are several good tri-state area and national publications," she said. "None, however, focus exclusively on Connecticut."

She described the staff as "a small and close-knit team, more like family. I take care of the editorial side



*For local resident and Realtor Madhu Reddy, being a publisher is a long-held dream.*

and generate the monthly content. We have an excellent team of freelance journalists, some of whom are non-Indian. A few of our contributing writers and columnists are experts in their respective fields."

Asked about the community's culture, Ms. Srinivasan said that describing Indian culture "is like describing the ocean. You've got to see for yourself or better yet, jump in. Broadly speaking, Indians in general value family and relationships and cherish



*Sujata Srinivasan, a freelance writer from Manchester, described the staff as "a small and close-knit team, more like family."*

both tradition and change."

She continued, "Our pages feature stories for and about the community. We've discussed issues ranging from domestic violence and immigration to cultural fluency and life in the diaspora. We showcase organizations and individuals who are inspiring to our readers, list a monthly calendar of events and also organize an annual charity fund-raiser in support of educational organizations in India. Last year, we raised close to \$25,000."

Ms. Srinivasan, formerly managing editor of Connecticut Business Magazine, is a senior editor on a project basis for several financial and economic research organizations and writes for several publications, mostly in the U.S. but also in India.

CT Indian Life, which has a circulation of about 5,000, has drawn praise from members of the Indian community.

"We get a lot of positive comments, a lot of feedback," Mr. Reddy said.

Among the publication's supporters is Sudha Swaminathan, a professor of Early Childhood Education at Eastern Connecticut State University.

"As a reader, I find that CT Indian Life keeps me informed about Indian cultural events and happen-

ings across the state," Dr. Swaminathan said.

"Previously, I knew that some of the sub-groups would be hosting events, but this is the first time that we have a forum that

brings all Indian language and cultural groups together. And that is not only helpful but also unifying in some way. I also find myself reading the magazine to learn about other Indian professionals in the state. I particularly like the feature sections where a new professional is profiled and you get to know this person's background and what they hope to offer from their position. Another helpful aspect about this magazine are the commercials. I personally didn't know about all these grocery stores, travel agents and shuttle services to JFK, all catering to the Indian population. These services are more tuned to our cultural needs and behavioral habits than a regular mainstream store or agent, so you can approach them knowing that they will understand your unique needs. Finally, I especially appreciate the quality and intent of the articles. Sujata maintains a high degree of intellectual depth, clarity and perspective and this is evident in most of the articles. For instance, the article/interview on the economy didn't just repeat the mainstream spin but offered a clear perspective for the Indian living in a foreign country, sort of like a global perspective but with an Indian focus. Also, the person who did the review of a bharathanatyam (dance) debut did a good job highlighting the young artiste's skills and talents but did not hesitate to point out the flaws or areas for improvement. I found these refreshing."

