

*Safety, community, and advocacy
for homeless women*

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PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Local Attorney Aims to Establish Regular Legal Clinics for Women's Crisis Organization as Newest Board Member

Suma Nair was certain that her life would be dedicated to helping women: As an undergraduate studying international relations at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, she gravitated to women's rights.

Ms. Nair, an associate with the Boston law giant Goulston & Storrs and the newest board member of On The Rise, the Cambridge organization that helps homeless women and women in crisis rebuild their lives, was sure she would spend her life working to extend women's rights the world over.

"What good is having the right to vote when you cannot exercise that right; when you cannot leave your house to vote without an escort?" Ms. Nair says, shaking her head. She was determined to be a champion for women and to forward their economic, social and cultural rights.

This mission lasted until she went to Harvard Law School and "met tax," as Ms. Nair puts it, laughing about her love affair with tax law, an interest that has shaped her law career.

"There is so much social engineering written into tax law," Ms. Nair says, explaining that tax laws are a driving social force; written to encourage certain behaviors through tax incentives and penalties.

A 2005 graduate of Harvard Law School, Ms. Nair was recruited to join Goulston & Storrs where she works in the private client and trust group, active in business succession and wealth planning. It was through her firm's dedication to the idea of community responsibility and service that she learned of On The Rise.

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Ms. Nair says she was most impressed by On The Rise's acceptance of women who are still struggling with addiction. Many shelters and social service organizations require that clients be drug and alcohol free before extending services.

"On The Rise ensures that women know that they matter even after they have been stripped, little by little, of all the intangibles that make us human: our families, our communities, our careers," Ms. Nair says.

Concretely, the center offers a daytime safe haven where women can shower, eat, do laundry, find clean and appropriate clothing and make telephone calls. They can sit, watch television and even participate in Voices Together, a writer's program that helps them explore their issues through the written word. Workshops that explore topics ranging from health to legal issues are offered periodically.

As a new board member, Ms. Nair would like expand the organizations contacts and network and is determined to ensure it continues to offer legal clinics to its clients on a regular basis. "These women have been under-serviced by the law," she observed. She would like to see these clinics encompass issues ranging from child custody to criminal complaints, housing and immigration issues.

Ms. Nair, a Wisconsin native and one of three siblings, is married to Colin Dean, an attorney working in the financial services field. They live in East Cambridge and love to travel and explore the world. Her parents, since retired to Florida, and her husband are supportive of her decision to commit her free time and expertise to the group. She explains that she had reached a place in her life and career where she felt comfortable focusing her attention outside her immediate work world.

"I started looking for a place where I could give back to the community; my community, where I live in Cambridge," Ms. Nair says, explaining that helping locally was as important as helping women. "The firm was very supportive of my decision to accept a seat on the board at On The Rise. It's not something you can do without the support of your workplace."

Ms. Nair and her husband dedicated a second Saturday to service: spring cleaning the remembrance garden at On The Rise. The garden remembers the victims of homelessness; stones are named and dedicated to clients who die.

"If you are homeless, who remembers you when you die?" Ms. Nair asked. "On The Rise keeps track of you; we remember you."

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