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**Why is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month important to you?**

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month is the time to acknowledge the accomplishments and contributions of the Asian American Pacific Islander group to our country. It is very important to share our success and achievements not only with Asian American and Pacific Islander group, but also with every American and to educate them about our culture. It is also our responsibility to teach the values, traditions and culture to the next generation.

**What would you like our RNDC family to know about you? Briefly tell us your story – personal and/or professional. What makes you uniquely you?**

Let me share a personal story: As a baby, the first word I spoke was “Aaaa...mmmma” instead of just “Amma” (“Amma” means “Mother” in my native Tamil language). I had a severe stuttering issue most of my life. It was a challenge throughout my early school days and continued during my college years. I did extremely well in all my studies, but speaking was not an easy task for me those days. I gradually built my self-confidence and worked to keep my stuttering under control. I still stutter once in a while to this day, but I don’t worry or care about that anymore. Once you start believing in yourself, you can accomplish so much. This was a hard lesson learned through my personal experience and I believe embracing my uniqueness helped build my self-confidence.

### **What are some of the family traditions that celebrate your heritage?**



The most meaningful way to celebrate our heritage is to include its elements in our daily lives. My wife Jeena and I honor most of the Hindu festivals including Diwali, the Festival of Lights. Whenever possible, we gather with friends during festival times and share our favorite south Indian foods, songs and of course, some Scotch. During auspicious occasions, including New Year's Day, we routinely visit various Hindu temples in Atlanta and also in Nashville, Tenn.

### **Tell us about your favorite food, meal or beverage that reminds you of your heritage.**

As I am originally from the most southern area of India, I love rice and various rice centric dishes. Rice is our staple food. When I travel within the USA, it is hard for me not to have rice at least once within a two to three day span.

My native city Kanyakumari is the place where two different seas, Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea, meet the Indian Ocean which provides fresh fish available to us every morning. So obviously fish is another main part of our life. I love fish, especially shrimp. White rice with spicy goat curry and spicy fried shrimp are two of my favorite meals.

### **Why is having an AAPI Associate Resource Group important and why did you volunteer to be one of the group leaders?**

With the recent increase in hate crime against our Asian communities, it is very important for us to work together as a group, comfort each other and educate everyone about the extensive misinformation circulating. It is important for all associates, especially because of our current social climate, to receive support and resources around mental well-being, mentoring and professional development.



As one of the senior Asian American associates at RNDC, I feel that it is my duty to get involved with such a wonderful initiative during this challenging time. I want to do whatever is in my capacity to help fellow associates and be part of taking our group to the next level of engagement. I sincerely thank our Chief Information Officer, Executive Vice President, Darrell Riekema and my direct boss Vice President, System Operations, Chuck Robeson for their support of my participation in Asian American Pacific Islander ARG.