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**YOU SHOULD KNOW, ANJNA CHAUHAN:
 Unifying an 'economic force'**

An Asian alliance group leader's goal is one voice for one of the area's diverse ethnicities.

By ALISON TRINIDAD, The Times-Union

Anjna Chauhan, 31, is the first president of the Jacksonville Asian American Alliance, a volunteer, nonprofit group created in June to promote cultural awareness and economic growth for Asian-Americans in the region.



Anjna Chauhan pauses during an outing with her dog, Caillou, at Dog Wood Park in Jacksonville. Chauhan, a lawyer who specializes in intellectual property issues, is the first president of the Jacksonville Asian American Alliance.
 BRUCE LIPSKY/The Times-Union

Born in London, Chauhan moved to Florida when she was 9. She earned a bachelor's degree in economics from New College at University of South Florida (now called New College of Florida) and her law degree from the University of Florida. She has her own law practice in Jacksonville and specializes in intellectual property issues.

Chauhan recently spoke to the Times-Union about entrepreneurship, being Indian in Jacksonville and her toy Australian Shepherd, Caillou (pronounced cah-you). Following are edited excerpts.

Q: After earning your bachelor's degree, you debated pursuing a MBA instead of law. Why did you choose law?

I figured that I had more options with law. You have the ability to work for yourself, for the state, for the private sector. ... I decided to go out on my own and forge ahead. My parents have been very entrepreneurial [they owned dry-cleaning stores in South Florida]. I always had the desire to one day do it on my own, too.

Q: There are several Asian-American groups already established on the First Coast. Why start another?

A lot of times people get together and it's a lot of politics and you lose sight of your goal. [JAAA] is a very broad group that addresses civic, community, political and economic issues. The work ethic of the Asian community is unsurpassed. ... Economically, we are a force to be contended with. But we're not from just one region, so it was important that we united and have one voice. Politically, it makes sense that our community, instead of being divisive, to have a voice.

Q: You volunteer for many different organizations. Do you do it to drum up business?

My philanthropic endeavors have nothing to do with my business. A lot of times, civic involvement is about networking. I do it because I like it. I wouldn't generate enough business to warrant my continued participation [in volunteerism]. I just think it's important.

Q: Do you consider yourself a minority?

Yes. When you live in a place and you're different, it can be a little intimidating. But my parents have always been proud of my heritage. I'm not white. I'm not black. I'm Indian. I think taking pride in your heritage and culture is important. The first language in my household is Gujarati. English is second.

Q: Tell us about your plans to throw a party for your dog's first birthday this month.

It's nothing really big. Hopefully, she'll find some other dogs to play with or something. She's the love of my life. Stating my own business, it's stressful. She's so happy to see me when I come home. All it takes is a scoop of peanut butter and she's mine.

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