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## Lawyer ‘feeds soul’ with philanthropy

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Nabeela Rasheed, who was born in England to Pakistani immigrant parents, is quick to admit that she was once thought of as the least likely of her siblings to step foot in the country of her roots.

She had been to Pakistan a few times for family visits in her youth and once again when she was in her early 20s. But after a while, she said, “I had left that part of my life behind. I had turned my back on the culture so completely when I was in my late teens.”

With an interest in science, Rasheed attended the University of Wales, Swansea, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in biochemistry and continued her studies at University of Liverpool, where she armed herself with a doctorate in biochemistry before heading to the United States in pursuit of her J.D. at Chicago-Kent College of Law.

Today, Rasheed, 44, is a shareholder at McAndrews, Held & Malloy Ltd. who has built a law practice that focuses on the acquisition and enforcement of intellectual property rights. From her 35th floor office at the downtown Chicago law firm, she immerses herself in biotechnology and traditional pharmaceutical and medical technologies, representing clients in those industries to acquire, enforce or defend against patents.

“I’ve spent a lifetime building my career and getting myself properly situated,” Rasheed said. “But you also need something that feeds your soul; that feeds your spirit.”

Rasheed, who identifies herself as a British-American with a “very multicultural family background,” has found a way to satiate that hunger — both in Chicago where she resides and in the faraway homeland in South Asia that she has come to re-embrace.

That food for the soul takes the shape of philanthropy, which includes her service on the board of the Chicago chapter of the Human Development Foundation, a nonprofit organization that delivers programs in education, health care, economic development, sustainable environment and social mobilization to people throughout Pakistan; and her involvement in Snow City Arts, a local organization that provides arts education to chronically ill children in the Chicago area.

Aside from her volunteerism with service organizations, Rasheed on her own keeps tabs on the basic needs of the people of a school she helped renovate a few years ago in Pakistan, in an impoverished village just outside Rawalpindi in Punjab province near Pakistan’s capital city of Islamabad.

She learned about the school, which also serves as a home for young boys from poor families, many of whom are blind, during a visit to Pakistan in 2007, around the time of the assassination of the country’s former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto.

“I went to visit this school and I was appalled. These kids were living in these small little rooms, sleeping essentially on mud floors. This place was mud huts and had no sewage system. It was just the most primitive environment that I’d come across,”



Attorney Nabeela Rasheed’s philanthropic activities include her service on the board of the Chicago chapter of the Human Development Foundation. For more information on the nonprofit organization, whose stated mission is to facilitate a nonpolitical movement for positive social change and community empowerment through mass literacy, enhanced quality of education, primary health care and grassroots economic development, visit [hdf.com](http://hdf.com).

Rasheed said. “You’ve got about 40 kids living in about four rooms. They live, study and eat in that one space.”

Today, with Rasheed’s financial help and coordinating efforts (“I’d get in touch with friends in Pakistan and they would then mobilize and get the day-to-day work done,” she said.), the school has been transformed from four mud rooms into modern living quarters equipped with a sewage system, carpeted floors, sleeping quarters and even a courtyard in which to sit and study.

And when she is not immersed in the work of a patent attorney, Rasheed periodically checks in with the school by phone, offering up such necessities as school supplies and clothing for the children and covering medical bills of those who become sick.

It was a previous visit to Pakistan that left Rasheed compelled to reach out to a place that she had long left behind. In 2005, after some 18 years passed since she was last in Pakistan, she decided to plan a trip as a surprise to her mother who had been visiting relatives there.

“I was the least likely of all her children (three daughters and two sons) to go to Pakistan. So it was a big deal for me,” she said.

The timing of that trip was fortuitous for Rasheed, who said the idea of the trip began forming in her mind when a massive earthquake on Oct. 8, 2005, hit the Pakistani-controlled part of Kashmir, near the city of Muzaffarabad, killing tens of thousands of people and injuring and displacing many more.

“That solidified it for me. I was going to go see for myself if there was anything that could be done to help,” she said. “When we got out there, it was incredible. I was shell-shocked at the aftermath of the earthquake. And the aid that came in from the West was phenomenal, no doubt about it.”

The supplies she saw coming in, however, were gathered in giant tents in the cities. “The infrastructure was so devastated that there was no way of getting stuff out to the people that needed it the most,” she said.

That’s when Rasheed, along with friends and relatives, assembled their own aid packages and distributed them at a refugee camp outside of Islamabad.

“I started reading up about what was going to happen to the kids and the women, in particular,” she said. “They were displaced; completely displaced persons.”

Rasheed said she still thinks about her original dream of building a school or center for Pakistani women and girls to learn basic literacy and vocational skills, an idea that met some resistance when she floated it among the community there before connecting with the school she now helps.

“The resistance was in the form of: You can’t do something for just women by themselves,” she said. “It’s a very conservative country and focusing purely on young girls and women, particularly if you’re a woman by yourself coming from the outside, it won’t fly.”

“My ultimate desire in all of this is:



Children participate in an English class in Pakistan as part of a program of the Human Development Foundation, which reaches out to underprivileged people in Pakistan. Chicago intellectual property attorney Nabeela Rasheed, who serves on the board of the foundation’s Chicago chapter, visited the students during a tour of one of the schools that benefits from her work with the organization.

Bring people education and bring them health and goodwill and the rest of it will follow,” she said. “You have to foster an educated young group of people that are healthy. Prosperity and all the rest of it will come.

“The kids are no different from kids anywhere else,” Rasheed said. “They just want to be loved, to be treated with kindness and respect.”

Meanwhile, she said, if there’s a girl who needs medical care or other help, “they tell me about it and that’s what I support.”

She also keeps pressing on with her service to such organizations as the Human Development Foundation, whose stated mission is to facilitate a nonpolitical movement for positive social change and community empowerment through mass literacy, enhanced quality of education, primary health care and grassroots economic development.

“She’s a very passionate person overall,” said Fakhia Rashid, the executive director of Human Development Foundation North America. “In whatever she does, for one thing, she has to believe in it. If she’s sold on an idea, then she will fully devote anything — money, talent, time.”

Her charity work has also caught the attention of the leaders of her firm, which recently joined forces with her efforts with the local Snow City Arts by agreeing to sponsor an upcoming gallery night

fundraising event on June 24 at the Floating World Gallery in Chicago.

“She showed our board at the firm a video of how they help children with cancer make their own movies,” name partner Timothy J. Malloy said via e-mail. “It was compelling and emotional stuff. We helped because of Nabeela’s commitment to this great cause.”

Malloy praised the biochemist/patent attorney as being “extremely knowledgeable in her field.” he said. “But she is even more amazing in her give back to the community way of going about her business.”

Rasheed is also involved in the Chicago chapter of Pakistani Entrepreneurs of North America, where earlier this year she helped organize a Stars for Hope benefit for relief efforts related to the devastating floods that hit Pakistan last summer. The event featured such celebrities as Aasif Mandvi of “The Daily Show,” Faran Tahir, who played Capt. Robau in the new “Star Trek” movie and Iqbal Theba of the series “Glee.”

One of the people she’s met through her work with those organizations is Asad Hayauddin, consul for trade and commerce in the Commercial Section of the Consulate General of Pakistan in Chicago.

“As a human being, I find her to be an out-of-the box thinker,” Hayauddin said of Rasheed.

“She’s a liberated Pakistani-origin

woman,” he said. “I personally think she embodies the best of modernity. That is the kind of model in this Western society which I think blows away the stereotype of what Pakistani women are like.”

“We have many other Pakistanis that are very successful in their own right, but essentially they just do their 9-to-5 job and go home and that’s it,” Hayauddin said. “It always takes the extra effort to affect change. Only the busy people can find time to do these things and she’s one of those.”

Hayauddin said Rasheed would have made a fine witness during the controversial congressional hearings conducted by U.S. Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., in March on the topic of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community.

“The image and branding of Pakistan unfortunately is very negative,” Hayauddin said, referring to what he called a “simple, one-sided view that it’s all extremism and terrorism.”

“[Rasheed] would be somebody in my opinion who could literally give

Congressman King a run for his money,” he said. “This would have been someone who would have brought a certain degree of levity to these proceedings. She’d be a credible witness to show that this is just being blown out of proportion.”

For a while, home for Rasheed was the U.S. and Britain, “because that’s all that I’ve ever known,” she said.

But she has come to realize that: “For children of immigrants, there’s also a home that gets into your psyche because it was the home of your parents. ... At any given moment, home for me can be Pakistan or England or America.”

With that background, she said, “and also where we’re living today in 2011, there is, for people of Pakistani heritage, a moral responsibility for us to stand up and say: This is who we are. We’re normal, everyday Americans. We are law-abiding — we’re caring.

“We have a responsibility to be not just taking care of ourselves and being good corporate citizens, but also holding

*Nabeela Rasheed, a shareholder at McAndrews, Held & Malloy Ltd., served as master of ceremonies earlier this year during the Pakistani Entrepreneurs of North America’s Stars for Hope benefit for relief efforts related to the devastating floods that hit Pakistan last summer.*

ourselves up to a better standard because we have to fight against this image.”

In a profession where she has found a way to blend her passions for science and the law, Rasheed said, “I love my work, and that’s what allows me to do this extracurricular stuff.”

“I think it’s just a matter of finding that direction and saying: This is what I want to do to give back,” Rasheed said. “You can do it in small pieces. You don’t have to give tens of thousands of dollars. Give your time, give \$10, give something of yourself. And, honestly I believe that whatever you give, you get back tenfold. You do just in peace of mind; in comfort.”