



The Tolani family, left to right, Raj Tolani, his daughter Aishya, his son Vijay, and his wife Alka.  
PHOTO COURTESY OF RAJKUMAR TOLANI

### Rajkumar Tolani, M.S. '84 **A Master of Startups**

Raj Tolani is living the good life. The resident of southern California has spent the past 18 months or so as a stay-at-home dad to his teenaged son and daughter. He's hardly shirking, though. His breather from the workforce came after more than 20 years on the cutting edge of technology, often as an entrepreneur heading up his own companies.

After earning his master's from URI, Tolani worked for a startup tech company in Boston. "I was fortunate to get into a startup and learn just what it takes to start a company. It was a very good learning ground for me," he says.

The temperate climate of California beckoned, and he headed west, working for a high-tech company in San Diego until 1996, when he decided it was time to start his own firm. ObjectLogic, specializing in developing view-of-access software for the manufacturing industry, grew quickly. By 1999 it had been acquired by Parametric Technology Corporation. "I worked with them for a year," Tolani says, "but PTC is a very large corporation. I felt that small companies are really my calling."

Off he went on his own again, starting InfoPrise, a company that provided data applications for mobile phones. Within a couple of years, his new company, too, was acquired, and Tolani once again found himself working for a larger corporation. "I worked with them for a couple of years," he says, "then I took some time off to spend with my kids."

While he's been tending to the hearth, his wife, Alka, has started her own company, designing and selling clothing and accessories based on traditional designs from India. Now that his younger child is just two years away from college, Tolani is once again thinking of starting a new company. "The ideas are starting to come to me," he says. "After a year and a half of leisure, it's time to get going again."

—Paula M. Bodah '78

### Debra Frey Fadool, M.S. '87 **The Role Model**

Debra Frey Fadool credits graduate school at URI with providing her with the perfect role model for her life and career.

That role model was Chemistry Professor **Phyllis Brown**, who was both a successful research scientist, a respected teacher, and a mother of four. "She was a really wonderful lady," Fadool says. "And a terrific role model for me at a time when there weren't that many female professors in science."



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEBRA FADOO

Fadool herself is now an award-winning scientist, a popular professor, a community volunteer, and a mother of three who has also managed to find balance between her family life and her academic career.

As a professor of neuroscience and molecular biophysics at Florida State University since 1999, Fadool splits her professional time between teaching and research on the neuropathology of diabetes and nerve damage through disease or injury.

On the home front, Fadool and her husband, James, also a professor at Florida State, alternate early morning and late night shifts at FSU to make sure one of them is always home with the children. "It takes a lot of coordination," Fadool admits, "but my husband and I split duties really well."

Fadool leads her daughter's Girl Scout troop, and on weekends once a month, she and her younger son sell succulents plants they have grown at a local farmer's market. The Fadool family also volunteers for an inner-city church program one afternoon a week. The Fadools' oldest son is a freshman in Florida State's engineering program.

A former cross-country runner at her *alma mater*, Albion College in Michigan, Fadool continues to run. She has competed in triathlons and has run the Boston Marathon.

In an academic world where women make up only a small percentage of tenured science professors, Fadool's well-rounded life is an inspiration for the next generation of young women entering the sciences.

—Sharon DeLuca '85

### Reza Corrine Clifton '03 **A Fast Paced Life**

Initially Reza Corrine Clifton's working life appears to consist of a complex jumble of responsibilities that the ambitious 2003 grad gets done seat-of-the-pants style. But after speaking with her, the picture emerges of a multi-talented and energetic individual with a wide range of interests.

She's moved from working at the Rhode Island Children's Crusade (now called The College Crusade of Rhode Island), to writing and lobbying with the Urban League of Rhode Island, to her position today as a workforce development consultant for YWCA Northern Rhode Island. She also spent 2007 serving as vice president of the Rhode Island Young Professionals (an auxiliary of the Urban League).

Since graduating *magna cum laude*, Clifton has become a Renaissance woman. In addition to her job, she is a community advocate and activist, deejay, and speaker on international, community, and women's topics. "I love music, theater, history, and current affairs," she says. "I want to make a difference. All I can hope is that what I'm doing today is related to the issues of tomorrow."

Clifton maintains an extensive Web site and freelances as a photographer and journalist. "It might seem like I'm zig-zagging through my career, but actually I'm going back to my studies in all that I do, especially in terms of race and class issues and in terms of my multidisciplinary approach. All my work is associated with my major in African and African American studies and my minor in international development. Human rights and dignity are my biggest guiding principles."

If, given her fast-paced life, catching up with Clifton proves tricky, her Web site, RezaRitesRi.com, provides an overview of her activities and work. The site has many monthly readers and fans as far away as Spain and California.

"I'm dedicated to finding a way for my life and career to mix," Clifton says. "Maybe it's naive, but I guess I'm kind of a free spirit."

—Bob Gulla



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