

*Lexington women have been on the move and we've noticed. More and more new businesses in Lexington are being started by women following a nationwide trend. Some reside in the community and some simply choose to locate their businesses here, but they are each*

*bringing their talents to our community and struggling with the work / life balance like the rest of us! Over the next few months Colonial Times writer Ashley Rooney will be catching up with some of these talented women and learning more about their businesses and what drove them to take the entrepreneurial path!*

## Meet Reem Yared of Help Around Town

E. Ashley Rooney

**W**omen entrepreneurs are increasing steadily, and here in Lexington we have quite a few. Many, such as Reem Yared, have leveraged their education and skills for the greater good and developed new business models.

I met Reem as a new board member of the Cary Memorial Foundation, where she ran a highly successful crowdfunding campaign.

Born in Lebanon, Reem moved many times as a child. Thanks to all those moves and the many different schools, she says, "You can throw me anywhere, and I land on my feet." And probably speaking yet another language!

Ultimately, she put that knowledge to work when she heard her friends expressing concern that their teenagers couldn't find summer jobs in 2010. Teens and young adults were facing the worst job market since 1942.

Reem thought about how she could use her skills to create work for people with little or no employment experience. "Everyone," she says, "has a to-do list of tasks in the

house or yard or business. A teen can do many of these tasks (e.g., grass cutting, mother's help, filing) and gain experience in the working world." Reem could use her understanding of the Internet to create a way to connect people through an online marketplace.

Responding to this perceived need and utilizing her talents, Reem founded HelpAroundTown to generate work and create entry-level job opportunities in June 2011. In the process, she built a trusted local marketplace that is a great vehicle for youth to gain employment experience. Reem points out that working teaches reliability, punctuality, and judgment. Interestingly, adults also began using it to supplement their income. A Winchester resident gave up his daytime job and began taking jobs on the site instead. He made \$30,000 one year.

In just four years, 12 percent of Lexington households have signed up. The site has 2,655 users in 108 Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire towns and 2,126 jobs posted. One youth made \$3,000 in the summer. One Lexington resident needed someone to clear the snow all the way to his oil-filling



**Reem Yared**

pipe before the oil truck arrived the next day. He put the job on HelpAroundTown; in several hours, a local high school student and an at-home mother applied. The job got done!

Reem is one of those American success stories. She arrived in the United States in 1984 when Harvard accepted her as an undergraduate. Harvard degrees are considered prestigious, but Reem says, "The worst six months of my life was trying to find a job after graduation. I had a Harvard education but no experience."

Ultimately, she acquired a good deal of experience from such companies as Dow Jones and Arthur D Little.

She also became a US citizen. She commented, "After paying taxes all these years, it's good to be able to vote!" After acquiring her MBA At Wharton, she began consulting on Internet strategy. Over the years, she has had many people mentoring her, and she is now playing an informal mentor role. She does point out that work life balance problems have not yet been resolved; more support is still needed.