

From left, James, Bindu, Jennifer and Jesline Mathew.



## Winning together

After marrying in Kerala, India, in 1994, James and Bindu set out with no plans to go into business together and no family history of entrepreneurship, yet 30 years later they share the running of UHY James, Dubai, UAE, representing one of our network's most successful work and life partnerships.

James Mathew, CEO and managing partner, and Bindu James, partner, corporate services, bring very different talents to their business but they share a vision and a commitment to their firm and to our network that is perfectly aligned to everything we believe in at UHY – family values, ambition, integrity and collaboration.

### Career shifts

As a child James attended the Sainik School, where he was educated in the leadership values, vision and resilience that still inform the way he works today. "My ambition was always to join the Indian Air Force but as a young man I changed direction and channelled a deep interest in numbers and entrepreneurial business into a career in accountancy that I still feel passionate about."

Bindu's earliest ambition was to train as a doctor but her strengths in science, education and people-oriented leadership led her to become a teacher and during the first months of their marriage she stayed in India to complete a Science and Masters degree in Education, while James was already establishing himself in the UAE working as a senior auditor.



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After graduating, Bindu also moved to Dubai in 1995 where she taught in secondary schools before joining James in a supportive role at his accounting firm, already a member of Crowe, a top ten global network.

"With two young children and growing responsibilities, supporting each other professionally and

personally became our natural rhythm," says Bindu.

"I had no reservations at all," says James. "My instincts were that having Bindu in the same professional space would make such a positive difference and I was right – her abilities and instincts have always added enormous value."

### Meeting the challenges

Key to their outstanding success is maintaining distinct roles. "We are involved in each other's lives completely, but professionally we honour our distinct strengths," says Bindu. "My role has evolved from administrative work, talent management and overseeing the finance department to curating the corporate culture of the firm which I really enjoy. Aside from James's exceptional work in audit, tax, advisory and risk consulting it is his vision that has guided us through some very tough times."

These toughest times came in 2019 when the Covid pandemic coincided with James's decision to exit the network he had belonged to for 25 years to set up UHY James.

“We were in lockdown, economic uncertainty was everywhere and we had to meet stringent regulatory requirements in order get empanelled with our new identity,” he says. “Support from our CEO, Rhys Madoc, and everyone else on the UHY Board was crucial during this transition and in the end we successfully retained most clients, gained new ones and held on to our loyal team. This was a defining journey and proof of the strength of our reputation, built over a quarter of a century.”

“We have always focused on creating value, empowering leaders and driving client growth through diligence, fairness and an investor’s perspective,” says James. A dedicated entrepreneur, he is a great believer in sharing the expertise and innovation that has helped him in his own career. “I have been fortunate enough to hold director positions on many prestigious company advisory boards and I enjoy stepping into mentoring roles and encouraging new leadership, especially in the UAE Chartered Accountants (CA) fraternity. My focus is on creating value for clients and leading experts to ensure their businesses are on course for significant growth.”

Away from the office Bindu relaxes by spending time growing fruit and vegetables in her garden and enjoying time with the family pet, Sugar, while James admits that apart from watching occasional films, he chooses to relax by listening to podcasts on entrepreneurship, reading about personal development or finance and sharing best practice with colleagues and the wider business fraternity.

**Family first**

More precious to them than anything else are the couple’s two daughters, both of whom have inherited their parents’ commitment to hard work and business

excellence. Jesline, 29, is a qualified chartered accountant working in London for a Big Four network as a manager, specialising in ESG. Meanwhile 24-year-old Jennifer lives in New York and is a product manager, working at the intersection of technology, community, and environmental impact.

“Our happiest moments are when the four of us are together,” says Bindu. “Whether we’re in Dubai, London, or New York our biggest joy is our time as a family.”



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Commercially the future of UHY James looks exciting as the firm continues to expand within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)\* region. “The UAE is a mature and opportunity-rich market,” says James. “Policy reforms, investor-friendly regulations, and rising global migration make this the perfect landscape for building and advising businesses.”

“We’ve learned that when we set aside egos, share our goals and lead with our values we can overcome anything. We couldn’t ask for a better partnership in life or in business and we consider ourselves very fortunate. The future is very exciting.” ■

\*The GCC is a political and economic alliance of six Middle Eastern countries: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Established in 1981, the GCC aims to achieve unity, promote cooperation, and coordinate policies among its members.



Bindu in her garden.



Family time with Sugar.

