



Indo-American Center

The mission of the Indo-American Center is to promote the well-being of South Asian Americans through services that facilitate their adjustment, integration and friendship with the wider society, nurture their sense of community, and foster appreciation for their heritage and culture.

News and Events, Winter 2006

2006 IAC ANNUAL GALA

Excitement shimmered in the air as film maker Deepa Mehta mingled with guests at IAC's 2006 Gala in October. Emcee Suchita Vadlamani, Atlanta's Fox 5 morning news co-anchor, added a spark of glamour as she expertly guided the program through the evening.

Video clips made during the filming of "Water" complemented an onstage conversation with IAC volunteer Lakshmi Menon in which Ms. Mehta spoke of the influences on her life and career and the commitment to humanitarian causes which led her to interrupt work in Europe for her one-day visit to the U.S. for the IAC gala. Inspired by her remarks, the audience of nearly 700 responded generously to President Vikram Sanghani's appeal for funds to install an elevator in the IAC building and engage transportation for housebound seniors unable to participate in the Center's senior programs.

Under the skillful management of event chair Prem Balani, generous donations from Mary Clemonds, National Republic Bank, and Mohammed Mirza fetched matching-fund donations, making the 2006 Gala a record-breaking fundraising event for IAC.

From the Editor's Desk

We sincerely thank the staff and volunteers for all their efforts to make our annual Gala Banquet a huge success.

I asked our Program Coordinators to share with us some of the major accomplishments of this year and the events that each of them are planning and looking forward to in 2007. In this issue I will highlight the many achievements of this year as well as focus on the efforts of our talented staff to foster and serve the multiple needs of the immigrant community.

I wish you all a happy, prosperous and healthy new year on behalf of our staff, volunteers and Board of Directors.

Warm regards,
Basanti Banerji

Upcoming Events

Cultural Connections Program of Field Museum of Chicago will present "Rhythm of respect" at IAC in collaboration with the Korean American Resource and Cultural Center. on March 24, 2007.

For more information and registration contact the Field Museum at ccuc@fmnh.org or 312-665-7474

Parents' workshop in Jan 2007, to familiarize the new immigrant parents about the US school system, Contact info: Nisar Naimi 773-973-4444 ext. 112 or nisar@indoamerican.org

Upcoming local Mayoral election- IAC volunteers and staff will conduct voters drive in the community to vote on Feb 27, 2007. Contact info: Susan Patel 773-973-4444 ext. 104 or susan@indoamerican.org

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www.indoamerican.org
Open Daily 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Closed Sunday

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Dear Friends,

As the year comes to a close, we would like to extend our most sincere gratitude to all of our generous volunteers, sponsors and donors. The work that the Center does can only be accomplished because of your continued support. While this year has had many wonderful highlights, the real work goes on daily. I encourage you to come and visit your Center so that you can see first-hand the impact you have made possible.

Please feel free to e-mail me at vsanghani@indoamerican.org to set up some time.

Happy Holidays and Warm Regards,
Vikram Sanghani
Executive Director

ABOUT OUR PROGRAMS

Senior's Program

The Open Book Peace Project has been a remarkably positive accomplishment for the Seniors this year, program coordinator Ms. Gita Chawla, announces with a smile. A variety of workshops add to their knowledge of health issues, Gita said.

What she would like to see in the future would be to reward the Seniors for their contributions to the community.

She would also like to collaborate with other Senior organizations, include some craft classes in the future, and more field trips, such as to the State Capital, Springfield.

Contact info:
773-973-4444, ext. 107

Public Benefits Service

Ms. Minaxi Shah is excited about the Healthcare Forum on "top ten ways Illinois will help at home", an event held at the IAC this year. It will provide useful information to immigrant families assisting them to get health care, childcare, educational, labor and citizenship services.

"We have also requested some more services in a meeting with Alderman Bernard Stone," She continues, "services such as Job training, Youth programs, Domestic Violence counseling, Health care and Affordable housing."

Contact info:
773-973-4444 ext 109.

Immigration Service and New Americans Initiative

Coordinator Mithu Mundul, Asst coordinator Suleman Nathani and our seniormost staff member G.S. Punia have assisted 40-50 persons applying for Citizenship every month.

Holding a monthly workshop alternating between the Center and a suburban site, part of an outreach program, has been of tremendous help to the community of the South Asian population.

The New American Initiative provided help to the immigrants eligible for Citizenship by distribution of materials and legal screening of applications.

Contact info:
773-973-4444 ext. 111

English as second language and Civics class

Ms. Jeannette Srivastava states that they have started a new curriculum that began in July of this year that is going well. Each week focuses on one topic that is relevant to adult students' lives. Each of the four classes covers the specific topic with increasing depth and complexity. All levels cover vocabulary related to the topic. Jeannette and her staff are looking forward to introduce a new curriculum partnering with Mr. Loknath Agarwal, Civics class coordinator. A morning class will be given that will be divided into two parts: English for Citizenship, and citizenship-specific material.

Jeannette and Loknath are collaborating in order to better meet students' needs.

Contact info: 773-973-4444, ext.105 or 108

Computer classes

While they are provided with lessons in basic computer skills, Seniors utilize the facility to communicate with people back home. The younger ones use the service for homework assignments.

Contact Chirag Shah
773-973-4444 ext. 108

SOME RECENT EVENTS AT IAC

Holiday Party for kids sponsored by WGN hosted at the Center on December 15.

Citizenship Workshop held in November.

Cancer Awareness program presented by American Cancer Society in October.

Youth services

Youth Program Coordinator Nisar Naimi's big accomplishments are the following: Official launching of The Albany Park Youth Program at Volta, Bateman and Hibbard Elementary Schools, and the South Asian Youth Empowerment Project collaboration with Chicago Public Schools, City Museums, Libraries, and various City organizations.

Nisar wishes to find vendors to donate healthy snacks and drinks for all youth programs. He would like to have a firm structure for the Youth Advisory Council, get more teens involved and purchase and collect recreational equipment for the programs.

Contact info:
773-973-4444 ext. 112

Hindi Lessons

Saturday 10 AM - 12 Noon, register at IAC. Call center for start date.

Kathak Dance Lessons

By the Anila Sinha Foundation, at IAC, on Sundays.

Contact info: 847-985-9142
or visit Asfkathak.com



HIGHLIGHTS

Senator Durbin's visit to the Indo-American Center on Nov. 1, 2006 was a great experience for the IAC staff, and students. He visited each classroom, conversed with our teachers and students, and listened to ideas about the needs of the Center - such as an elevator to make Center resources more accessible for the Senior citizens. The event received media coverage.

Cyriac D. Kappil Legal clinic:

Held every second Saturday of the month, the Pro Bono clinic assists with complicated legal cases for the people in the community.

Cultural Heritage/ Museum of Indo-American Heritage

As a part of The Field Museum of Chicago's Cultural Connection Program, the Center, with the Japanese-American community, successfully hosted two sessions in March on "Mirror, mirror on the wall...How am I perceived by all?" depicting the tale of various attires.

Programs for 2007 including ongoing neighborhood orientation sessions will be conducted by the Museum of Indo-American Heritage (MIAH)/IAC.

To arrange an educational visit to the ethnic neighborhood

contact: Dorothe Shah at
dorothe.shah@sbcglobal.net
847-475-6853

or
Susan Patel at
susan@indoamerican.org
773-973-4444 ext. 104

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DO YOU KNOW...

IAC staff and volunteers contacted over 2200 voters through its GOTV (Get out To Vote) effort for the past election on Nov 7, 2006.

No. of All Kids applications filed by IAC to date:
70

An increase in applicants has resulted due to the Healthcare Forum event at the IAC, a new State resource that provides useful information to immigrant families.

No. of clients IAC assisted (monthly average) getting Public Benefits: 293

To date, No. of Seniors (over 65 yrs.age) attending Day Care Program at the Center: 219.

**Come visit our Center to volunteer and help serve the community.
(773) 973-4444**

ANNOUNCEMENT

It is with much regret that we announce Chris Zala's resignation as the Center's Executive Director. Chris started at the Center in November 2003 after a very competitive executive search process. Chris' experience and enthusiasm have helped the Center gain valuable recognition within the South Asian community. His ability to connect with members of the community has endeared him to the clients who come to the Center. We thank him for his 3 years of service and wish him every success in his future endeavors.

Vikram Sanghani has gracefully agreed to help us out as the interim executive director. Vikram's qualifications and talent will be useful for the Center.



Chris Zala

Photo by Bapu Arekapudi