

COMMUNITY

New IAC program initiatives help integrate South Asians communities

BY NISHA SUTARIA

Chicago: Now, more than ever before, the Indo-American Center (IAC) has been working to leverage community resources to raise the bar in serving the community. In the face of decreasing funding streams from government and foundation sources, IAC has partnered with various community organizations and government agencies to extend its services for clients.

Over the past 20 years, new programming initiatives have continued to define IAC's breadth and offerings. In 1990, IAC began as a one-room office providing space for a senior recreation club; within a year, community needs encouraged IAC to offer immigration and citizenship assistance. Quickly, IAC realized that a successful citizenship applicant required some background in English and American history and, thus, civics and ESL classes were born. In its first year, the Indo-American Center re-corded 480 visits to the Center; now, 20 years later with various new programming initiatives, this number is close to 40,000.

Though the face of IAC has changed over the past two decades, the driving force behind this change remains the same today. From the beginning, the most important factor to community members was that IAC represent and remain a secular, nonreligious organization serving as a nondiscriminatory resource for

the community. "We strive to serve members of the community regardless of their backgrounds and we will continue to set this example and play this role in the community," said Jay Luthra, IAC Executive Director.

As IAC continues to uphold this fundamental notion, new program initiatives continue to pave the way for improvement and build upon the current

(AAI), Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) Institute, the State's Put Illinois to Work program, and Illinois Action for Children/Illinois Department of Hu-man Services' summer SPROUT! program, IAC has been able to connect community resources with internal resources to make its programs more comprehensive despite limited available funding.

social well-being. To address this need in community teens, the Youth Program offered its first Spring Teen Cricket League in spring 2010 through a partnership with After School Matters. Open to Chicago Public School students, the league works to expose the youth to the traditional South Asian sport of cricket, while promoting diversity and meeting recreational

employment. Over the summer, the Adult Literacy Program piloted a summer Job Readiness workshop series, which hosted biweekly workshops covering topics such as resume writing and interviewing skills. These services, which were open to students with specific job skills needs, as well as the broader community, will be continued on a monthly basis through the fall and winter.

IAC has plans to expand many of these initiatives, including the Job Readiness Program, into a more developed and regular program that clients can benefit from year round.

Unfortunately, maintaining these initiatives will pose a challenge as much of the funding that has made them feasible is not guaranteed in the long term. In particular, Put Illinois To Work support will end in the Fall of 2010, eliminating additional staff members that helped to implement expanded programming in the Adult Literacy and Youth programs.

The source of this success for IAC stems from support provided by individual, foundations, government, and corporate donations and funding. Like current circumstances, when public and foundation funding is scarce, IAC relies particularly on support of the local community to allow the push for more program initiatives; and individual donations from community members are especially important.

IAC benefit gala on September 19

Chicago: Each year, the Indo-American Center (IAC) Annual Benefit Gala brings together the community in celebration and support of IAC. This year, IAC greatly anticipates this annual event themed 'Connecting the Community,' illustrating the need to raise more awareness surrounding the dire need for community support to help sustain its programs and services. IAC welcomes Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Cisco



Padmasree Warrior.

Systems, Inc., Padmasree Warrior, as the keynote speaker and welcomes back ABC 7 News Anchor Ravi Baichwal as Master of Ceremonies.

The gala will take place on Sunday, September 19 at 5:30 p.m. at the Oak Brook Marriott.

For tickets and sponsorship information, please contact Kali Cohn, IAC Development Coordinator, at (773) 973-4444 ext. 114 or at kcohn@indoamerican.org.

foundations of IAC programming: Citizenship and Immigration Assistance, Public Benefits Assistance, an Adult Literacy Program, a Youth Development Program, Civics and American History courses, computer classes, a Seniors' Program and the Cyriac D. Kappil Legal Clinic.

By partnering with organizations and resources, including Asian American Institute

These program initiatives were especially apparent during summer 2010, with the addition of afternoon conversation classes and Saturday field trip classes in the Adult Literacy Department, a three-week intensive afternoon Civics class, and additional full-time youth program staff for its summer camp.

Among these expansions, IAC has found new ways to address

needs in the West Ridge neighborhood. In addition, the SPROUT! program allowed summer camp participants to take a field trip each week in August, exposing youth to cultural institutes, including the Museum of Science and Industry, and local Chicago landmarks that many had never seen before.

Such well-being for Adult English learners includes

Jain Center to host gala event of Raas-Garba

Bartlett, IL: After successfully organizing a community event of "Mela" on Indian Independence Day, and celebrating "Paryushana Parva," Jain Center of Chicago is preparing to host a unique musical event for three nights to celebrate the culture and heritage of Gujarati folk dance and *dandia* at Jain Community Center on October 8, 9 and 10.

Jain Center has invited a famous musical group -- Raj & Smruti Pandya to make this event a gala musical weekend for the Hindu community. Lead vocalists and band leaders Raj and Smruti Pandya, who presented acclaimed performances in more than 41 states, rose, quickly in the music world with the concept of merging Eastern and Western music.

They also performed in movie *American Desi*.

Members of the society and event planning committees are excited for hosting a such mega event at Jain Center. The whole facility will be well decorated and dining area will

fun-filled musical festival event would be a sold-out event. Necessary security and parking arrangement have been made. Everyday various contests will be arranged to encourage the participants with different themes — *Dholida naa Taale* on October 8, *Bollywood* on October 9, and *Fusion* on October 10.

Admission to the shows is by tickets priced at \$10 a day or \$25 for three-day and they can be had from Jain Center (630)-837-1099 and selected Indian grocery stores. Jain

Youth Forum of Chicago (JYFC), Young Jains of America (YJA) and other youth organizations also have joined hand in the three-day celebration and are inviting students of all nearby high schools and colleges.



Youngsters all set to rock Raas-Garba.

(File photo)

be prepared to serve a variety of snacks and food for all. Hemant Shah, vice president of the organization, explained that, with the support of more than 1,500 membership families and affiliated other community organizations, this

Eid Bazaar attracts hundreds

BY ASIAN MEDIA USA

Skokie IL: An *Eid Bazaar* was held in the Holiday Inn here on September 5, to celebrate *Eid ul-Fitr*, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan for Muslims. The all-day event brought more than 26 vendors and over 300 customers together from all over the Chicagoland area.

Syed Sabahat Jamal, organizer of the event, said: "It not only gives the Indian-Pakistan community a chance to purchase the items that they need for the upcoming *Eid* celebration but also provides local businesses an opportunity to showcase their exquisite merchandise, mingle with the community, and generate profit.. it moves the glorious Islamic traditions and heritage forward in America."

The *bazaar* exhibited the latest Indian-Pakistani fashions, including clothing, shoes,

purses and elegant jewelry. There were also booths that highlighted Islamic clothing and general Islamic items such as *tasbehs*, *hijabs*, copies of



Exhibitors at Eid Bazaar.

Holy Quran, handmade wooden crafts and more. There were also unique vendors such as *Slatki Sunet*, which sold black seed products like health and beauty supplements, shampoos, conditioners, creams, and more.

Additionally, charity institutions like Sun Charity and the Islamic Foundation participated in the event to raise funds for the victims of the recent floods in Pakistan.