

## IAFC honors Voice of Asia publisher



Koshy Thomas, fourth from left, was presented the award for "Outstanding Journalism" by IAFC in Dallas on April 16. Dallas: "Peace, Progress and Prosperity through shared vision and cohesiveness among Indian Americans" was the

theme of the evening gathered at the FunAsiA Richardson, TX as a part of the "8th Annual Awards Banquet" hosted by the Indian American Friendship Council (IAFC) on April 16, 2011. IAFC presented awards to several Americans at the event. Koshy Thomas, Publisher of Voice of Asia, was honored with "Outstanding Journalism" award.

IAFC, founded in 1990 is a non-profit organization that provides and promotes political education and a common platform to exchange views with Local, National and International policy makers. Its mission is to improve United States-India relations, support developing countries, promote global democracy, protect the interests of the Indian-American community, and educate Members of Congress. This program is hosted under the leadership of Prasad Thotakura, Texas State Coordinator of IAFC and sponsored by Horizon Travel LLC, ekNazar, FunAsiA and VIVA Railings besides a host of other local business entities and community leaders based in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Raj Asava, Board of Director member and the Banquet Chair as a Master of Ceremony extended a warm welcome to the visiting guests and over 300 Indian American community leaders and professionals representing various organizations. Asava said "We are blessed to be living in a democratic system and the Indian community with strong education and work ethic has done extremely well and we should really help those in need".

Thotakura, introduced the "Peace, Progress and Prosperity through shared common vision", the theme of the 8th annual IAFC awards banquet. Thotakura gave a breath taking presentation on the progress and prosperity through diversity with supporting statistical data. Quoting from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. "Christ gave me the message and Gandhi gave me method" Thotakura reminded the audience that India being the vast educated country holds the second largest number of billionaires. Education, good work ethics and the family values are the key differentiators for the prosperity. For example 38% of physicians in US are of Indian origin. Progress is not all about economy and a growing number of Indian Americans are making contribution in the corporate world, science and politics".

Ramki Chebrolu, Board of Director member, IAFC introduced Honorable State Senator from Iowa, Swati Dandekar. Dandekar spoke on the importance of participation in American politics and invited American Indians to be more active in social and political activities.

"Advocacy and participation makes a big difference in ones goal" quoted Dandekar. She gave several examples of how the political entry of Asian Americans contributed to the Iowa politics. IAFC felicitated Dandekar with "Pride of India" award for her accomplishments and civic service.

Dandekar took the honor of introducing Hurst-Eules-Bedford ISD Superintendent Dr. Gene Buinger. Dr. Buinger was presented the "Community Bridge" award by Dandekar for his role in introducing Hindi language to the school district. Dr. Buinger reiterated his

commitment to continue the expansion of Hindi language and is heading a delegation to India soon.

Dr. Sat Gupta, Board of Director of IAFC introduced Dr. Janak Joshi, Honorable State Representative of Colorado. Dr. Joshi said first generation Indians have gone through challenges through 1970s and then decided to stay in US. "I was active in the caucus and including my family members. Good karma always pays" according to Dr. Joshi while quoting the good fortune he has experienced. Dr. Josh was awarded the "Pride of India" by IAFC. Dr Joshi felicitated the Dallas based young entrepreneur Veeral Rathod, co-founder and president of a luxury men's apparel company. Taiyab Kundawala, Vice President of IAFC, introduced Kesha Ram , State Representative D-VT, who is the youngest representative in the nation. She spoke on what it means to be in politics. Everything happens for a reason is the popular quote by her father who migrated from the pre-independence India and married to a woman from Israel. She said "politics for me has been a mix of chance and a mix of choice, requiring knocking on every door and meeting people. Listening and building relationships in the community and learning history is the first thing to be done". IAFC felicitated Ram with "Pride of India" award. Rounok Joardar of Plano West Senior High School was recognized with a "Rising Star award by Ram for his numerous academic and non-academic accomplishments since 2007.

Dr. Niranjana Tripathy introduced Dr. Prasad Srinivasan, State Rep R-CT who is the first Indian American and the only physician to have served in the CT assembly. He spoke on how the switch from medicine to politics took place and said "choice but not chance is what happened to me to move from medicine to politics. Community involvement is extremely rewarding as long as one has the skill set to negotiate through the journey". IAFC felicitated Dr. Srinivasan with "Pride of India" award. While on the stage Dr. Srinivasan felicitated Koshy Thomas, Houston-based journalist and the publisher of Voice of Asia, a community newspaper since 1987, with "Outstanding Journalism" award.

Rao Kalvala, Secretary, IAFC introduced Aruna Miller, State Delegate D-MD. She has been serving as an active precinct officer since 2004. Miller said: "If you are serious make sure you have the support of the family. You need to have champions like community and special interest groups. Make sure you have personal contacts with all the voters". IAFC felicitated her with "Pride of India" award. Piyush Patel of IAFC recognized various DFW area the local city council aspirants who are seeking political offices.

Dr. Tarakumar Reddy, Executive Vice President of IAFC, invited the President and CEO of the World Affairs Council Jim Falk, who was presented with a check of \$5,000 by Dr. C.R. Rao, Treasurer of IAFC and Thotakura. Murali Vennam, Board of Director member, IAFC invited Ms. Elizabeth of American Heart Association (AHA) who was presented with a check of \$3,000 by IAFC. AHA informed

that India will bear 60% of the world's cardio vascular diseases by 2020. Dr. Pavan Dhingra of the Smithsonian Indian American Heritage project "HomeSpun" gave an overview of the project and questioned the audience "How will history depict Indian-Americans" and requested financial contributions.

The thought provoking, and educational awards gala came to an end with vote of thanks by Sushmita Kosuri of the youth wing to the audience, volunteers who spent countless hours of valuable time, the evening sponsors; Fun Asia, Horizon Travels, eKnazar, Viva Railings, media partners TV9 and FunAsiA for providing excellent meeting facilities and tasty food.