

## **Tri-city who's who at glittering IACF dinner**

*Tuesday, 04.03.2007, 10:25pm (GMT-7)*

FREMONT: Glittering with elegance and the presence of Californian and Tri-City (Fremont, Newark and Union City) who's who of politics, the 6th annual **Indo-American Community Federation (IACF)** dinner was held at the Hilton Newark Fremont on March 23.

The theme for the dinner was 'Unity Though Diversity: A Model For America in the Twenty First Century' which it showcased beautifully through its 2007 honorees and their acceptances and the performances by Chinese, Mexican and Indian artists which ran the gamut of different cultures and allowed us to view small cultural vignettes. John Garamendi, Lt. Governor of California and a fifth time returnee to the annual dinner was the chief guest. His keynote speech focused on community, immigrants and education.

He said there are "things you can do as individual, as a family but some things you can only do as a community". He also said it is difficult to be a first generation immigrant and in the debate over illegal immigration, "we forget the incredible power that immigrants bring to the nation". According to him, "there are many keys to California's success but the most important is education". Every young individual in California is not handed the key to or does not have equal access to education.

However, "we should be prepared to make the investment in education so we can pass on to the next generation the best society" we can. State Senator Ellen Corbett said, "People come from around the world" to California "in a rainbow of colors. To see this entertainment we would have to go around the world many times". She said this is a very special microcosm of what the US is about- freedom. E Pluribus Unum (Out of Many, One) is so important a concept that we put it on our money and that is what we see in action today.

Fremont Mayor Bob Wasserman said that Fremont has been named 'most diverse city in the nation for its size'. Newark Mayor Dave Smith said, "It is no coincidence that the last letters in both community and opportunity are unity". Anaheim Council Member Harry Sidhu was visiting the Bay Area while campaigning for the State Senate. He said that "Indo-Americans are known for their IT which is taken as Information Technology but it actually means Indian Talent".

Other attendees or their representatives included Assembly member Alberto Torrico, Hayward Mayor Mike Sweeney, Milpitas Mayor Jose Esteves, Union City Mayor Mark Green and County Supervisors Scott Haggerty and Nate Miley. The Citizen of the Year award was presented to Garrett Yee, Ohlone College Board Trustee who has recently returned from deployment in Iraq. He is also a board member and past president of Citizens for a Better Community.

Dr Anmol Mahal was honored with the 'Leadership in Medicine' award and said that 'we need to invest in the health care infrastructure'. He also said that 'we live in this country with extreme abundance' and we should not forget the people who do not have that. Roger Bakshi was honored as 'Business Entrepreneur' of the year. He said that "an entrepreneur is a risk taker" and that he took that risky plunge in 1996. Last year his company and he funded \$800 million which story symbolizes the sweet rewards entrepreneurs can reap.

Other honorees included Cathy Howard and Sandi Soliday (Dedication and Commitment in Education), Gaby Machuca (Small Business Promoter) and Gary Robinson (Small Business Promoter). IACF dignitaries included Ashok Kumar, Shashi Sharma, Dr Subhash Garg, Dr Naresh Sharma, Keshav Ayare, Rahul Zutshi, Timothy Reilly, Steve Cho and last but not the least Jeevan Zutshi who is the Chairman and founder of the organization. Dr Doug Treadway, President of Ohlone Community College and Nina Moore, Trustee, FUSD spoke about education and its impact on how the future is shaped.

Nina, especially, spoke about 'How schools can help build hate free community' and said that in the Bay Area we have a head start on that task because "our children have been exposed to multiculturalism". She also said that "bigotry is not born into us, it is learned". The guests enjoyed Chinese folk dance (Academy of Chinese Performing Arts), Chinese martial arts (O-M Kei Kung Fu School), Mexican Ballet Folklorico (Maestros Del Folklor Mexicano) and Indian dance forms Kathak (by Joya Nandy Kazi and Ballori Sengupta) and Bhangra (by Matters of Community).

The evening started with the singing of the American National Anthem by Lorna Zee and the Indian National Anthem by Papiha, Neeru, Suchitra and Anu which further emphasized the theme of multiculturalism. It ended with everyone present merrily dancing away to toe tapping music which gave the lie to the maxim 'you can't mix business with pleasure'.

**Jaya Gautam**