

IACF Celebrates Unity with Speeches, Awards

By **ASHFAQUE SWAPAN**
India-West Staff Reporter

NEWARK, Calif. — A keynote speech that called for attention to the needs of American children marked a colorful celebration of diversity at the Unity in Diversity Dinner 2009 here March 27 that brought together elected officials and a rainbow representation of the many diverse communities in California.

Hosted by the Indo American Community Federation, the event recognized four San Francisco Bay Area residents and a Seattle-based author for their contributions to the community — Shinn-Shyng Chang, Pete McHugh, Pramela Ramachandran, Rashmee Sharma, and Albert Wang.

Chang is a gynecologist at Washington Hospital in Fremont, Calif.; McHugh is a former member of the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors and vice-mayor of Milpitas, Calif.; Ramachandran is a pediatrician with Lucille Packard Children's Hospital in Fremont, Calif.; Sharma is an author and researcher from Seattle; and Wang is a specialist in internal medicine. Papiha Nandy, a media

professional, and Deepak Sachdev, a dentist, received honorable mention.

The list of honorees, which included persons of Indian, Caucasian and Chinese descent, underscored the spirit of unity in diversity that was close to the heart of community activist and IACF chairman and founder Jeevan Zutshi.

"I am so happy to see that an idea that came to me over a decade ago continues to flourish and draw the wonderful, rich and diverse communities of the Bay Area together," Zutshi told *India-West*. "I am thrilled to see so many elected representatives support my efforts as well."

Organizers used the event to highlight the needs of children in America, with a keynote address delivered by Deborah Roderick Stark, commissioner of the First Five Alameda County Commission and an expert on children's issues.

Stark, whose husband Pete is a long-time Democratic congressman, did not mince her words.

"You know, it's sad for me that America professes to love its children but its actions too often fail to live beyond rhetoric," she told



Honorees at the Unity in Diversity Dinner 2009 hosted by the Indo American Community Federation March 27 in Newark, Calif., seen with IACF founder Jeevan Zutshi (l-r): Reshmee Sharma, Shinn-Shyng Chang, Albert Wang, Pramela Ramachandran, Pete McHugh and Jeevan Zutshi. (Ashfaque Swapan photos)

the audience. "Every industrialized nation in our world and even some developing nations, too, have a higher regard for the next generation than we do in America."

The statistics she provided were pretty grim. In the U.S., a baby is born without health insurance every 41 seconds, a baby

with low birth weight is born every two minutes, and every 18 minutes a child dies before its first birthday. One in six children live in poverty, and among industrialized nations, the U.S. standing is 22nd in low birth weight and 25th in infant mortality.

She said she would like "to encourage you to join us in building support for children's health . . . (and) comprehensive health care and strong families for every child in America."

She ended with a final request: "I hope that each of you, each day, will take time to reach out to a young child, give them hope, teach them (something) exciting about learning to boost their confidence, and make sure they know they are loved."

In addition to the diversity of communities represented, the audience included a number of federal, state and local elected officials, including Rep. Pete Stark, D-Calif.; State Sen. Ellen Corbett, D-San Leandro, who spoke briefly;



Deborah Roderick Stark, commissioner of the First Five Alameda County Commission and an expert on children's issues, delivering the keynote address at the Unity Dinner 2009.

and Newark Mayor Dave Smith, who was master of ceremonies.

A number of eye-catching dance performances punctuated the evening's proceedings. The dances were presented by Mountian International Dance Company and the Jung SuWon Martial Action team.

IACF was founded in 1994 by Zutshi with a goal of getting Indian Americans more involved in mainstream America by working on issues affecting them in their adopted land.

Zutshi said he came up with the idea over a decade ago at a very difficult time for America.

"The idea of having a forum of unity struck me way back after the terrible terrorist attacks of 9-11. It was at that time of great concern and tragedy that I felt most deeply that while America is a diverse tapestry of people from many lands and cultures, there is far more that unites us than there are ways in which we are different," he told *India-West*.

"So at a time when America was mourning — as I was — I thought it was a good time to also celebrate all that is wonderful about this country. The Unity Dinner does exactly that — it celebrates our common humanity along with our diversity, not in spite of it. And it's wonderful to see the continued support from the community that proves the message is every bit relevant even today. I think it's a message that will always be relevant."



SATISH PATEL

AGENT, NEW YORK LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
CA Ins. Lic# OA95351



The Company You Keep® Life Time Member

Registered Representative, NYLIFE Securities LLC (Member NASD /SIPC)
6300 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1900 • Los Angeles, CA 90048
(323) 782-3000 • satishpatel@ft.newyorklife.com

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life Insurance • Retirement Planning • Buy/Sell Agreement • Pension, Keogh, IRA, 401(K) • College/Education Funding • Mortgage Protection • Mutual Funds* • Estate Planning 	<p>Bus: 800-787-3047</p> <p>Res: 310-417-3551</p> <p>Cell: 213-445-4358</p> <p>Fax: 310-417-3631</p>
--	--



*Offered by NYLIFE Securities LLC (member of NASD/SIPC)

International Airlines Travel Agent Network

PUNJAB TRAVEL

ARC



WE HAVE MOVED TO

324 South Abel Street

Milpitas, CA 95035

CSTR #1001108-10



AIR INDIA



UNITED AIRLINES



AIR CHINA

中國國際航空公司



Lufthansa



CATHAY PACIFIC



SINGAPORE AIRLINES

A great way to fly



EVA AIR



virgin atlantic



GULF AIR

A World of Difference



KOREAN AIR



CHINA AIRLINES

中華航空



malaysia AIRLINES



KINGFISHER AIRLINES



JET AIRWAYS

SAN JOSE

(408) 441-7570

For Last Minute
Emergency
Tickets Only

408-655-8694

FREMONT

(510) 824-8009

HIRING TRAVEL AGENTS - 3 Positions Open - Apply Immediately