AUGUST MONTHLY MEETING RECAP

By Saloni Amin

Rahul N. Mehra

"You must be the change you wish to see in the world." These words, uttered by prolific leader Mahatma Gandhi, and quoted by President Darshna Patel in her opening remarks when describing the Chamber's Executive Committee, resonate perfectly with the Indo-US Chamber of Commerce and its initiatives. The sultry evening of August 21 was no exception to the norm. Atop the Urban Centre Towers of the Intercontinental Hotel in the heart of the Westshore District, the Centre Club with its warm, inviting atmosphere and panoramic view of Tampa Bay was the perfect venue for a mixer of entrepreneurs and professionals.

The corporate sponsor for this past month's social event was Mehra VistaHealth, a leader in Global Employee Wellness. Mr. Rahul N. Mehra, M.D., Chief Executive Officer/Chief Medical Officer of the company, has been an active member of the Chamber and held the role of immediate past Chairman of the Chamber's Board. As a sponsor and Board member, Mr. Mehra actively engages with Chamber initiatives and is a source of inspiration to our members. As active members, invited guests and newcomers filled the venue, Mr. Mehra addressed the invitees and his message emphasized the need for "creating connections" through modern platforms such as Chamber events, as well as celebrating the spirit of bonding embodied in the ancient Indian tradition of Raksha Bandhan.

Followed by the keynote address, Tim Jarett, General Manager for the Center Club was invited to the podium and his welcome to our guests reflected the hospitality of the Center Club which, led by Founding Board of Governors Chairman Lee Bentley, was established in 1984 to set the standard of excellence for Tampa Bay business professionals and community leaders. Tim shared his keen understanding on the significance of the Banyan tree in ancient Indian culture, its endurance and role in rural India as the community networking hotspot. His knowledge, eloquence and inclusiveness on the subject was a refreshing surprise for many!

Tim's welcoming note set the tone for the evening's simple yet fun networking game. Upon their arrival at the registration table, guests were each given one half of a playing card and were asked to find the individual that held the second piece of the same card. Following this announcement was an immediate flurry of activity followed with buzz phrases and conversation starters such as "are you my match?" In the midst of drinks and hors d'oeuvres, the networking process took on a life of its own as our guests worked the room trying to "find their match," resulting in the exchange of ideas and the making of new connections! And lo and behold ladies and gentleman, networking one on one was in progress!

Amongst the invited guests for the evening was Mr. Al Higginbotham, Hillsborough County Commissioner, ever encouraging with his presence and leadership. Also present at the event were Chairman of the Board Mr. Paresh Patel, founder of Homeowners Choice Property and Casualty Insurance Company, Inc., Mr. Dilip Patel, Board member and partner in Shutts & Bowen, LLP, Mr. Dilip Kanji, co-founder of the Chamber, Mr. Minesh Patel, Board member, and Dr. Rahul Mehra, who graciously sponsored the evening. Their combined vision, leadership, mentoring and encouragement to the Chamber inspire its members to strive to be the initiators for the change that we want to see in this world. We thank all the attendees for making this event a success!

L-R: Al Higginbotham, Hillsborough County Commissioner, Paresh Patel, Chairman of the Chamber's Board, and Shyam Mundra.

ON THE MOVE . . .

Each month, the Indo-US Chamber highlights members making strides in their professional lives. To be featured in this section, please attend our monthly networking meetings or email submissions directly to info@indo-us.org.

Abihijit Joshi is an architect working in the field of aviation for the last seven years. He recently passed the exam to become a certified member of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE). The AAAE is the most influential organization in Washington representing all the major large and medium hub airports. With this new certification and membership, Mr. Joshi is now uniquely qualified to serve airports as a registered architect in the state of Florida. The certification is beneficial to consultants as it provides them with an in-depth understanding about airport management, and most of the CEOs of these airports are members of the AAAE.

Murad Ajaney moved to Tampa about a year ago from Toronto, where he was Manager of Operations for one of Canada's leading marketing companies. Upon his move to the Tampa Bay area, Mr. Ajaney bought his first gas station in the Lutz area, and has recently acquired an interest in another location in Clearwater. With a Masters in Business, Mr. Ajaney recently established his company, E-Magic, which distributes a brand of electronic cigarettes called Magic Puff. E-Magic has started distributing the product in Florida, and Mr. Ajaney is in the process of expanding distribution nationwide.

For more information, please contact Mr. Ajaney at muradajaney@hotmail.com.

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INDO-US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNUAL BANYAN BALL

Thirteen years ago, the Indo-US Chamber of Commerce held its first Banyan Ball event in the hopes of being able to give back to the organization's members and supporters. The ball is a metaphoric representation of the conversations, unity, and camaraderie that is built when gathered under a banyan tree. Today, the event has turned into an elegant black tie affair, honoring Asian-American businesses and individuals who have distinguished themselves through professionalism and community service.

This year's regal-themed Banyan Ball will be held on Saturday, September 7 at the Renaissance Marriott located at International Plaza. The program will include a speeches, presentation of business awards, dinner, and entertainment. One of the tenets of the Banyan Ball is the facilitation of a unique opportunity to network with business and community leaders.

This year's event is close to being sold out yet again. Please visit www.indo-us.org for table, tickets, and limited advertising opportunities.

INDO-US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Darshna Patel - President
Paresh Patel - Chairman of the Board

Saloni Amin
Jigish Desai
Ronak Ganatra
Simer Gandhi
Jal Irani
Sonia Kallarakal

Anitha Kancharla
Suleman Makhani
Jain Mundackal
Suraj Nayee
Aakash Patel
Amit Patel

Reshma Patel
Tricia Patel
Lakshmi Sastry
Gitanjali Senapati
Nancy Soifer
Francis Vayalumkal

MEMBERS OF THE CHAMBER SHOW SUPPORT IN HOUSTON . . .

On August 17th, the Indian-American Chamber of Commerce for the Greater Houston Area hosted its 15th annual gala at the Hilton Americas in downtown Houston. A few members of the Tampa chapter were able to show support and attend the event in Houston. From left to right – Aakash Patel (VP of Sponsorships), Darshna Patel (President), Dilip Kanji (founding member of the Chamber), Renu Khator (President of the University of Houston), and Suresh Khator (Renu's husband, who is a professor at the university).

Upcoming Indo-US Chamber Event:

Indo-US Chamber of Commerce annual Banyan Ball

Date: Saturday September 7th, 2013
Time: 6:30 p.m. onward
Location: Renaissance Marriott (4200 Jim Walter Blvd, Tampa, FL 33607)
Tickets: $150 per person/ $1,250 per table

INDO-US CHAMBER MISSION

"To provide an active forum in which Asian American professionals and business owners, through an exchange of ideas, with a unified voice, can communicate, interact, and secure a position within the business industry and become a source of inspiration by promoting professionalism and excellence through education and community involvement."

HISTORY OF THE CHAMBER

The Indo-US Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1999 in Tampa by Indian American business owners and professionals in the Tampa Bay community. Our goal is to create an organization that affords like-minded individuals with opportunities to work together, grow together, and learn from one another. The programs and services offered by the Chamber are designed to provide the professional community with the tools necessary to continuously evolve and expand their businesses. More importantly, the Chamber cultivates opportunities to network, where business relationships can be established and friendships can blossom.

INDO-US Chamber of Commerce "Together, the future is ours."

P.O. Box 20232, Tampa, FL 33622
Phone: (813) 358-8384
Email: info@indo-us.org

WWW.INDO-US.ORG