## INDO-US CHAMBER MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: THIRUNELLAI "TG" GANESHAN

*Each month, the Indo-Chamber of Commerce holds a raffle at our business networking event for the opportunity to be highlighted in this spot. This month's winner is Thirunellai "TG" Ganeshan, Vice President of Finance, Busch Gardens Tampa & Adventure Island.*

***1. Describe your current role at Busch Gardens...***
I serve as the Vice President of Finance for the Tampa parks of SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment. The company is headquartered in Orlando and the portfolio includes 10 parks – SeaWorld, Aquatica, Discovery Cove in Orlando, Busch Gardens and Adventure Island in Tampa Bay, SeaWorld at San Diego, SeaWorld at Texas, Busch Gardens and Water Country at Williamsburg Virginia, and Sesame Place at Langhorne, Pennsylvania. I function as the Chief Financial Officer for the second largest park system within the portfolio. As the head of Finance, I am responsible for the financial performance of the park and serve as the sounding board to the Park President and the Senior Leadership team of the park.

A theme park, even though looks as a very simple operation on the outside is comprised of several businesses in one entertaining package. There is the pure scale of operations, having to manage the traffic that comes with tens of thousands of guests day in and day out. We have a huge and unique animal collection that makes us one of the premier zoological facilities in the world. We provide Broadway style theatrical shows as well as several entertaining performances in the park, which in itself, is a separate line of business. To top it, we have a unique inventory of world class roller coasters and water rides. And we operate restaurants and retails stores inside the park and you can imagine the complexity of managing all these lines of businesses.

***2. How did you initially get involved in the industry?***
I started out as an Aerospace engineer from IIT-Madras, now known as Chennai. Little did I know that I would be managing theme parks. I started with Anheuser-Busch in St. Louis after my MBA at the University of Texas at Austin. Anheuser-Busch happened to own theme parks and it seemed like a fun place to work. As Anheuser-Busch was bought by In-Bev in 2008, there was an opportunity to join the theme park subsidiary in the newly created corporate offices in Orlando. I jumped at this opportunity and moved from St. Louis and helped the company transition through the In-Bev ownership and the sale of the theme parks to the Blackstone Private Equity Group. Last Fall, I joined the Tampa parks as the head of Finance.

***3. What trends affect your industry?***
The theme park industry falls in the entertainment and leisure segment; that is heavily dependent on discretionary consumer spending, consumer confidence, and economic cycles. The industry is rebounding from the economic slump with more U.S. consumers taking vacations that they perhaps, may have postponed the last few years. The industry also relies on travel, especially travel to destinations (Orlando, Tampa, San Diego) and airlift from key international markets. South America is becoming a very important market for theme park operators in Florida and progress to improve the visa situation in Brazil will provide a good uplift to not only theme parks but also businesses in this region.

***4. What role does Busch Gardens play in the local Tampa Bay Community?***
Busch Gardens and the water park, Adventure Island, are good economic engines for the city of Tampa and local businesses. Every year, we attract millions of tourists from international markets and other states to visit the parks and also experience Tampa. In addition, we take great pride in our role as a corporate leader by supporting numerous community efforts. Each year, Busch Gardens supports environmental causes, educational programs and thousands of children and adults who have life-threatening illnesses, are mentally or physically challenged, disadvantaged, or face other hardships. This support is provided through contributions to charitable organizations worldwide, as well as through in-park events.

In the past decade, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay has contributed more than $18 million (cash and in-kind) through park supported programs and to a number of local organizations including United Way, Junior Achievement, Boys & Girls Clubs, American Cancer Society, Boys Scouts of America, Tampa Bay Partnership, American Heart Association, Make-A-Wish, Give Kids The World, Compassion Partners Program, and SeaWorld & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund.

***5. What business opportunities are available for Indo-US members and your organization?***
We are constantly looking to partner with businesses in the Tampa Bay community to highlight Tampa as a destination and increase the length of stay of visitors to Tampa. In addition, we as part of SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment, are proud to partner with a variety of local and national organizations in achieving mutually beneficial educational and conservation goals. Interactions include internships, cooperative learning programs, guest speakers, service learning opportunities, and education awareness campaigns.

On a similar note, I would encourage the community to visit Busch Gardens if you have not and promote the park to your visiting family and friends. This park provides a very unique experience in terms of animals, rides and shows that is available nowhere in Central Florida. We have launched several exciting new attractions in the park over the last 12 months that includes our newest coaster "Cheetah Hunt" and Cheetah Run animal habitat, Animal Care Center, and an enthralling ice-show called Iceplorations. Have a great time on your next visit to Busch Gardens and Adventure Island!

Busch Gardens Tampa Bay

***For further information, TG Ganeshan can be reached at tg.ganeshan@buschgardens.com***

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## *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."***

**SPONSORSHIP INQUIRIES: RONAK GANATRA (813) 562-9036 • SPONSORSHIP@INDO-US.ORG**
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## RECAP: APRIL MONTHLY NETWORKING MEETING

Last month's business and networking meeting, held on Wednesday April 18th at the corporate headquarters of Homeowners Choice Insurance, featured the topic "Structured Speed Networking." Indo-US Chamber members were encouraged to network in a rapid and organized fashion using "elevator pitches" to maximize the number of quality business contacts in a timed format.

In addition, the Indo-US Chamber was also proud to host Hillsborough County District 2 Commissioner Victor Crist at the event. Crist spoke to our members about his prior experience representing northern Hillsborough County in the Florida Legislature, having served in both the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate. Crist discussed his vision of economic development for the greater Tampa Bay area via innovate public/private partnerships as well as collaborative efforts across the five surrounding counties.

*The Indo-US Chamber of Commerce monthly networking meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 5300 W. Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33607. There is no cost to attend and dinner is served. No RSVP required.*

## UPCOMING INDO-US CHAMBER EVENT: 2012 BANYAN BALL

The Indo-US Chamber of Commerce is proud to announce that **the 2012 Banyan Ball** will be held at the **Crowne Plaza Tampa Westshore on Saturday May 19, from 6:30pm onward**.

This elegant black-tie affair – the Chamber's annual marquee event – has been sold out for the past four years and will feature a host of local business leaders and dignitaries in attendance along with a cocktail reception, dinner, keynote address, and entertainment.

Last year's event attracted over 300 guests to the *A La Carte Pavilion* in Tampa. Rocky Patel, founder and CEO of *Rocky Patel Premium Cigar Company*, which manufactures and distributes over 20 million premium cigars across the globe, served as the evening's keynote speaker. Patel delivered a riveting and well received account of his success story; from an initial career as entertainment lawyer in Los Angeles, CA, to his cigar production facilities located in Honduras and Nicaragua, and the recent launch of a premium cigar lounge in Naples, FL. The event was further highlighted by performances from an East-West musical fusion ensemble and Bollywood-themed dance entertainment.

**To purchase tickets for the 2012 Banyan Ball, visit www.indo-us.org. To inquire about limited sponsorship opportunities still available, contact Ronak Ganatra at (813) 562-9036 or rganatra@gmail.com**

**Business Awards**

A custom of the Indo-US Chamber of Commerce at the Banyan Ball is to recognize and present awards to businesspersons and companies that are emerging as dynamic forces in these tough economic times. Whether you are growing or simply employing novel business strategies within your industry or profession, the Chamber seeks to recognize those individuals that are shining beacons of our community in the following categories:

- **Businessman of the Year**
- **Businesswoman of the Year**
- **Young Businessperson of the Year**
- **Community Service Person of the Year**

***Criteria***
The businessperson and/or principal owners of the business should be a resident(s) of the Greater Tampa Bay area including Hillsborough, Pinellas, Pasco, Manatee, Sarasota, Polk, and Hernando counties (neighboring counties will also be considered).

***Nominations***
Submit the following criteria related to your choice of nominee(s) **by May 10, 2012 to Suleman Makhani (suleman.makhani@gmail.com)**

- Name of individual or company
- Brief description of profession or company
- Brief description of the individual or company's background
- Reason for award – why you believe this individual or company is deserving of the award

All information provided will be treated as confidential and go directly to the Indo-US Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.