



NEWSLETTER DECEMBER - 2006

BE AIA MEMBER AND STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNITY

WISCONSIN CHAPTER, – MADISON, WI 53744-5042

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LETTER FROM THE AIA PRESIDENT

I would like to take this opportunity to wish everyone a very Happy and Prosperous New Year. As my term comes to an end, I reflect back to all the events we had this year. Graduation, Mothers day, Picnic, India Day, Diwali and Children's Day. Every event was a learning experience with lot of growing pains, but in all, I am glad I got this experience and was able to rise to the challenges presented to me.

We had a successful year with positive figures. The success was mainly due to high membership numbers (85+), sponsors for every event (thank you sponsors), my dedicated committee, and of course the participants and audiences.

Our General Body meeting is scheduled for Saturday, February 10th. Please attend and show your support to next year's president Anuradha Palaparti. I would encourage you to join the committee and make AIA even stronger and better.

Thanks again for your continued support and Happy New Year.

Sarita Jha
2006 AIA president

UPCOMING EVENTS

General body meeting -February 10th, 2007 - at Divine Savior Church, 5702 S Hill, Madison, WI 53705 at 5 p.m. Free event with free food. More details coming soon.

AIA would like to congratulate these members for their achievements.

Abhik Bhattacharya - For completing his Ph.D from UW Madison on December 17th, 2006.

Garima Agarwal - Wed Pavan Singh from Virginia on December 10th, 2006

Vinay and Devi Dhodda - On the arrival of their new baby boy "Krish"

Jasvir and Sukinder Singh Seerha on the birth of their son Jaijot Singh Seerha on November 22nd, 2006.

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Newsletter Editor

Dr. Krishna Sijapati

AIA Celebrated Diwali With Great Enthusiasm

Association of Indians in America (AIA) celebrated 2006 Diwali festival in Madison. The program was held at the Badger Ridge Middle School in Verona on October 28, 2006. Approximately 250 people attended the ceremony.



Diwali is one of the most widely celebrated festivals of south Asia. This festival has both spiritual and social importance. The social importance involves getting together, forgetting any animosity in the past, and developing new friendships, new relationships, and new harmony with family and friends. Enjoy the company and regenerate the relationship for peaceful living in the house, community, and nation. Diwali also postulates the renewing of relationships between siblings. This is also considered a ceremony of brother worship in some societies. Sisters worship their brothers and brothers offer gifts to their sisters in exchange. People enjoy this festival and it is meant for developing social goodwill, social welfare, and social harmony.



The spiritual meaning, however, is very deep. And it's for every soul of the world! Every individual has an inner



light – the light of God. So enlighten your heart with the light of God that is the message of Diwali. God has given a divine spark to each individual and everyone should illuminate divine light through this spark that dispels the darkness or ignorance and clears the vision to see the divine world.

In Madison the Diwali celebration was primarily the social function. The program started at 5:30 P.M. with a delicious dinner of Indian food. The important part was the cultural program performed by the various professional singers and performers including local talents. People look forward to this festival for the variety of live cultural programs.



The program started with a welcome speech by the current AIA president Sarita Jha. Welcoming all guests, she mentioned that the celebration of

Diwali has been a tradition for a long time and people enjoy this festival. The cultural program began with a classical Bharatnatyam dance. Ramya and Shanta from Natyarpana school of dance performed the dance.

Padma Mehta, a well-know singer from "Sargam" music group in Chicago sang

popular Hindi songs from old to new era.



Mrs. Mehta who has 25 years of singing experience lived up to our expectation. As one of her fans said "She gives chills and thrills with her music". Mrs. Mehta was accompanied by her husband Kishore Mehta and another singer Anil Jha also from Chicago. The duo of Padma Mehta and Anil Jha kept the crowd going until 10 pm and wanting more music.

There were number of other groups who performed the artistic dance in the program. The Asian Pacific Dance Study Group presented "Mari Mahisagar" a popular garba dance. This group also presented Margam kali a popular dance from Kerala. It was well choreographed, very rhythmic and clothing was quite colorful.



After the dance and music program there was



a brief ice cream break followed by open dance floor for all. The AIA president thanked the guests, as well as the following individuals and businesses that sponsored the Diwali event.

Praveen & Kalpana Sinha, Randeep & Roopak Talwar (Best Western),

Balwinder & Rajinder Seerha (Just in Time Corporation), Somesh & Sarita Jha, Smart Solution, Inc., Maharani Indian Groceries, India House (Prabakaran & JansiRani), Home Savings Bank (Vasavi Talluri – personal banker/office manager), Jeyakumari Sivakumar

CHILDREN'S DAY

AIA celebrated children's day on November 18, 2006. The program was held at Memorial High School from 2 to 4 p.m. and it was a free event.

Balagokulam children also participated in this program. The program coincided with the birthday of the India's well-known leader Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Nehru has been a role model for the younger generations in India.



During the program Nehru's life history was read to inspire the children to follow the path of right, justice, and self-reliance. Nehru was a sincere supporter and follower of Mahatma Gandhi. Under Gandhi's influence, Nehru began studying the *Bhagavad Gita* and



practiced yoga throughout his life. During the program children participated in various arts and craft activities like making a centerpiece for the holiday season, hair bands, beaded necklaces, and cards with stickers, crayon, glue, etc.

The Home Saving Bank sponsored the program. After the program refreshments were served to all children and parents. About 25 children participated in this program.

VOLUNTERISM: **A REWARDING EXPERIENCE**

Volunteers are the jewels of this nation. Every year millions of people volunteer to extend their expertise and valuable services to make this nation a beautiful place to live. No matter where you live you will find volunteers working with open hearts for sake of benefiting individuals, communities, and the nation.

Association of Indians in America (AIA) has adopted a number of projects to offer voluntary services to the community. One the projects is the highway cleanup project. This project was initiated in 2000 under the leadership of Swaminathan Balachandran. This project covers Highway 14 W from Oregon, Wisconsin to Madison, a total length of 1.5 miles.



JULY HIGHWAY CLEANING VOLUNTEERS.

S. Balachandran, Nitin Sainin ,Abilash Seshadri, Sayon Chandrakanthan ,Suvai Gunasekaran, Mayuran Chandrakanthan, Sowmya Adibhatla, Ashanee Singh, Himanshu Sharma, Dashini Sathasivam Rakesh Sharma, Rao - Murali Adibhatla, Harish Sharma, Kanthan Sathasivam, Rita Singh

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation began the Adopt-A-Highway program to allow groups to

volunteer and support the state's anti-litter program in a more direct way. Under this program each qualified group takes responsibility for litter control on a segment of state highway. The group picks up litter on this segment at least three times per year between April 1 and November 1. Each group must provide one adult supervisor for every five or six workers. All workers must be at least 11 years of age or in the 6th grade. There are about 1900 organizations and groups that participate in this program each year and assist in keeping Wisconsin highways beautiful by collecting several tons of garbage for proper disposal.



SEPTEMBER HIGHWAY CLEANING VOLUNTEERS

S. Balachandran, L. Balachandran, Vinay Dhodda, Dennis Murray, John Pinto, Niveditha Prabakaran, Sakthivel Prabakaran, Arjun Seshadri, Nagendra Sehgal, Namrutta Sehgal ,Rathinam Vembu

In 2006, three different groups of volunteers picked up all littering on the side of the designated highway on May 6, July 15 and Sep. 2. On the pick-up day volunteers are given breakfast and brief orientation at the Balachandran's house. After that volunteers proceed towards the worksite at 9:45. The work will be completed at about 11:30. Within an hour of work, the number of trash bags collected is unbelievable.

This is a very rewarding experience and you feel self-worth living in the community and this nation. If you are

interested to volunteer for 2007 cleaning program please send an email to Swaminathan Balachandran at balachas@uwplatt.edu.

CONGRATULATION

Lalitha Balachandran, one of the active AIA members and the highway cleaning coordinator has been promoted to an advanced Engineer position at the Department of Transportation, engineering division. Among the number of candidates Mrs. Balachandran, was selected considering her work experience and education in the related field. In her new position she will be supervising several other engineers and support persons. Congratulation Lalitha-ji, we are proud of your achievement.



DIWALI EVENT AT THE WHITE HOUSE

During George W. Bush's Presidency, it was the fourth occasion, on Thursday October 19, 2006 to hold a Diwali celebration at The White House.



President Bush in his message said " I send greetings to those celebrating Deepavali (Diwali), the Festival of Lights. Every year during Diwali, Hindus remember their many blessings and celebrate their hope for a brighter

future. The Festival of Lights demonstrates the rich history and traditions of the Hindu faith as friends and family come together in a spirit of love and joy. ---- Laura and I send our best wishes for a joyous Diwali and a year of happiness."

As President Bush was on a campaign trail, Karen Hughes, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, and one of President's closest and most trusted advisors for more than a decade represented the President at the event. She eloquently described the growing warm relationship between India and the USA and how much the President values



this relationship. Karen identified Diwali's festivities with hope and compassion and wished all homes around the world to be full of light during the Diwali festivities. She affectionately extolled the success and the contribution of the Indian Community to the USA. She asked the Indian community to continue their efforts in getting the US Senate to pass the US-India Civic Nuclear Agreement related legislation.

Ambassador Bhisma Agnihotri did the invocation highlighting the importance of Lord Ganesh & Goddesses Mahalaxmi & Saraswati in the daily lives of Hindus, especially at the occasion of Diwali.

The lighting of the Diyas ceremony was led by Dr. Piyush C. Agrawal, an Indian community activist and the National Coordinator of the Global Organization of Peoples of Indian Origin and Mr. Jay Hein and were joined by Ambassador Bhishma Agnihotri, Commissioner Akshay Desai and Indian American Republican Council Chair Dr. R. Vijaynagar.

Dr. Akshay Desai emceed the event and in his remarks described the importance of Diwali and what it means not only to Hindus but all Indians. Reception included a variety of Indian sweets & salties catered by Ms. Jyoti Soni & Bukhara Grill of New Jersey.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The treasurer presented the following report of Diwali income and expenses for 2005 and 2006

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2005</u>
<u>Income</u>		
Cash collections	\$2,470	\$2,619
Sponsors	\$950	\$0
Total Receipts	\$3,370	\$2,619
<u>Expenses</u>		
Food	\$1,950	\$2,263
Supplies/Maid	\$190	\$245
Music	\$1,000	\$300
Verona Schools	\$135	\$283
Total Expenses	\$3,275	\$3,091
Surplus/(Deficit)	\$145	(\$472)

Editor – Dr. Krishna Sijapati

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DO YOU KNOW?

1. India's population (2004): 1.1 billion; urban 27.8%.
2. Area: 3.29 million sq. km. (1.27 million sq. mi.)
3. Annual growth rate: 1.3%
Population Density: 324/sq. km.
4. Religions: Hindu 82.41%, Muslim 12%, Christian 2.3%, Sikh 1.9%, other groups including Buddhist, Jain, Parsi 2.5%.
5. Government: Federal republic.
Independence: August 15, 1947.
Constitution: January 26, 1950.
6. GDP (FY2005-06): \$797 billion.
Real growth rate (FY2005-06): 8.4%. Per capita GDP (FY2005-06): \$761.
7. Although India occupies only 2.4% of the world's land area, it supports over 15% of the world's population.
8. President--A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
9. Prime Minister--Dr. Manmohan Singh

DATA SOURCE: Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, December 2006

***AIA OF Madison wishes you a happy NEW YEAR 2007 and
Bring a lot of Joy and Cheer
To YOU and Your Family.***

Sarita Jha
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