



NEWSLETTER

NIAASC

NATIONAL INDO-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Spring/Summer 2009 Newsletter

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BRIEF HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: *The National Indo-American Association for Senior Citizens (NIAASC) was initiated in 1998, and incorporated in early 1999 as a 501C3 tax-exempt not-for-profit organization. In 2009 it is celebrating its ten years anniversary by reviewing its accomplishment and planning its future activities.*

ACCOMPLISHMENTS BY NIAASC DURING LAST TEN YEARS:

*NIAASC has organized 17 conferences/workshops on subjects helpful to seniors and their families. All conferences and workshops are posted on the NIAASC web site. NIAASC has been holding two conferences every year. NIAASC has also helped in planning and development of conferences arranged by other organizations and institutions in New York and California. NIAASC representatives have spoken and taken leadership roles at various conferences arranged by local and national organizations to address issues and aspirations of seniors.

*Its web site established in 2003 has attracted thousands of visitors. Through its links one can reach all US Senators and Representatives (i.e. 535 politicians). There are many other links to private and public entities for the benefit of seniors. The web site (www.niaasc.org) is updated regularly.

*NIAASC has utilized its professional and technical resources on numerous occasions to help; it has referred persons to appropriate private or public entities to help on issues such as Entitlement Programs, Senior Housing. For those unable to communicate comfortably in English, NIAASC Board members can assist in Hindi, Gujarati, Punjabi, Bengali, Marathi, Urdu, Tamil, and Malayalam languages.

*It publishes a periodical newsletter with lots of useful information. The newsletter is mailed to over 450 individuals and organizations, and is posted on the web site.

*NIAASC Board members have maintained direct relationship with a number of ongoing Indian American Senior programs. At this time it is limited to New York and New Jersey area.

*Whenever needed, NIAASC has collaborated with organizations such as the New York branch of AARP in advocacy efforts on legislative matters.

*Starting with eight members NIAASC now has about 135 members; a majority of them are life members.

TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL BODY MEETING -- NOMINATION FOR THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND HONOREES:

NIAASC will hold its TENTH annual meeting and 18th conference on Saturday, October 24, 2009 at 10:30 A.M. (*Details will follow*). Please mark your calendar for this full day event.

Attention NIAASC Members:

BOARD NOMINATIONS As per NIAASC Constitution and Bylaws one-third of Board members retire every year. This year five Board members will retire. They are eligible to be re-elected for a term of three years ending December 31, 2012, if they so desire and can fulfill their obligations as Board members. There are four vacancies on the Board: one for a one-year term; one for a 2-year term; and two for a three-year term. Therefore nine positions on the Board are to be elected. The Nomination Committee submits its report at the General Body meeting for approving the nominees. You may nominate any NIAASC member to the Board of Directors. The nominee should be willing and be able to discharge the responsibilities. You may send the nomination latest by October 10, 2009 to NIAASC, 7 Roberta Avenue, Farmingville, NY 11738 (Attention Nominating Committee).

HONOREES: NIAASC bestows awards in three categories: One person directly involved with Indo-American ongoing senior program; one ongoing senior program; and one well-known community leader who may not necessarily be involved with senior program. Honorees are finalized by the NIAASC Board of Directors. All members are urged to suggest names with details about the nominee for such awards and send to NIAASC, 7 Roberta Avenue, Farmingville, NY 11738, by the end of September 2009.

WORKSHOP MAY 30, 2009: NETWORKING AMONG SENIOR PROGRAMS

NIAASC held its 17th workshop on May 30, 2009 on NETWORKING AMONG ONGOING INDO-AMERICAN SENIOR PROGRAMS. 75 participants from some 12 senior programs came out with some practical ways of networking. The participating Senior Programs varied in size of membership and in their longevity. The Keynote Speaker for the workshop, **Dr. Vasundhara Kalasapudi**, a practicing Psychiatrist and Founder and President of India Home Inc., outlined Ten Commandments of Networking, and enumerated each for the benefit of workshop participants. She elaborated in details where to start and how to proceed from one step to next. (See Ten Commandments of Networking in the Box below). She also underscored the importance not to limit networking with Indian entities only but to work closely with American entities also. Her comments were supplemented by **Chan Jamoona**, Founder and Executive Director of United Hindu Cultural Council Senior Center (UHCCSC), **Dr. Ashwin Pandya**, Founder and President of Senior Citizen Center of New York at the Vaishnav Temple and NIAASC Vice President, and **Mrs. Nirmala Ramasubramanian**, Coordinator and **Jagajit Singh**, Executive Director, of the Hindu Temple Senior Program.

The 10 Commandments of Networking
"Getting The Most Out of Business Networking "
by Mark McGregor, for About.com"

- 1) Thou shalt drop the "what is in it for me?" attitude.
- 2) Thou shalt listen.
- 3) Thou shalt build a relationship.
- 4) Thou shalt give the first referral.
- 5) Thou shalt not tell others of the referral you require; thou shalt "show them" with a story.
- 6) Thou shalt be specific of the type of referral.
- 7) Thou shalt reciprocate when appropriate.
- 8) Thou shalt participate in the network executive, functions, and network time.
- 9) Thou shalt thank the person who gave a referral.
- 10) Thou shalt follow up on the referral within 24 hours



Workshop ended with lunch: NIAASC volunteers serving lunch



Vasundhara speaking: Panelists (L to R)
Nirmala Ramasubramanian, Ashwin Pandya and Chan Jamoona



Section of the NIAASC workshop participants

Along with the networking discussion, participants felt that success of a Senior Program is derived by targeted action to attract and retain seniors from the community. As is the norm, this involved certain "do's and don'ts" which is presented below as Rules for Success in running a Senior Center

**Make the program enjoyable to seniors so that they will want to participate by including fun things for them to do such as dancing, games, interacting with Youth etc.*

**Build into the programs things that are of practical help to the seniors e.g. lectures on health, financial planning, Social Security and Medicare, and other day to day issues*

**Make sure that the senior centers establish affiliations with various organizations in the community including schools, fire department and Police, health food stores such as Whole Foods and Trader Joe's, local Community Board and so on.*

**Try to use young people with energy to get a lot of administrative items and work involving communication with outside world, by using Interns.*

**Without political connections, most things in this country do not appear to move forward and, therefore, try to establish contact and invite local and state politicians to the events at the Center. In the long run this will pay off rich dividends when things really need to get done.*

**Design formal programs so that seniors connect with youth on a regular basis and be mentors to them and also learn from their modern ways of thinking and doing tasks.*

The Workshop participants also focused on the role NIAASC can play in networking of senior programs. Following recommendations were made:

- *Develop a comprehensive program for Senior Organizations, and encourage cooperative and interactive ventures with one another.
 - *Based on the experience of senior programs, NIAASC should develop a standard protocol for senior programs, to be shared amongst senior programs throughout USA
 - *Encourage networking among ongoing programs as well as establish a working relationship with different community organizations within programs' service area
 - *NIAASC should maintain a database and share the same with senior programs as and when it would help the local senior programs;
 - *An ongoing relationship should be developed with Governmental agencies at local, state and federal levels. NIAASC should develop guidelines as to help develop this cooperative relationship and identify areas that can be helpful to Indian American seniors;
 - *NIAASC should work closely with other Senior Organizations in understanding how they distinguish and address issues of recent senior immigrants and early senior immigrants, so that NIAASC could disseminate this information for the benefit of other groups facing similar challenges.
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FUTURE PLANS:

NIAASC shall sustain and strengthen its existing tasks to accomplish its mission and objectives to serve seniors throughout USA. In addition, it will attempt to focus on the followings constructive steps with the help and support of private and public entities involved with seniors.

*** Develop a Database:**

A comprehensive database of senior programs and centers will be established with the cooperation of Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), National Federation of Indian Associations, News Media, and other outreach efforts.

*** Increase NIAASC Membership and Encourage Affiliations**

NIAASC will increase its membership nationwide to help a stronger voice in its advocacy efforts.

Efforts will be made to develop affiliations and working relationships with Ongoing Senior Programs throughout USA. Guidelines to establish such affiliations will be developed keeping in focus that they help seniors, accomplish NIAASC mission and objectives, and support the work being undertaken by various Ongoing Senior Organizations and Programs.

*** Increase Frequency of Communication, and Interactive Collaboration:**

NIAASC wants to publish its newsletter more frequently, focusing more on Indo-American senior programs, for the benefit of seniors and their families.

Efforts will be made to work with the National Federation of Indian Associations (NFIA). The goal will be to persuade NFIA to help NIAASC develop a working relationship with NFIA members on issues pertaining to seniors of Indian Origin.

Efforts will also be made to encourage networking among ongoing Indo-American Senior Programs. Encourage Indian community organizations to initiate programs for seniors in their service areas and make them integral part of their regular activities.

*** Develop a Professional Advisory Council & Affiliation with a Teaching Institution:**

An Advisory Council will be formed comprised of eminent professionals to advise and help NIAASC in its various responsibilities such as exploring financial resources, developing position papers, etc.

Possibility of affiliation of NIAASC with a reputable university/college or a research institution will be explored in order to help NIAASC to augment its credibility and also provide additional manpower resources and expertise.

*** Develop and Publish Position Papers:**

Develop position papers on important issues that will be helpful to seniors and their families. Most of the information for such papers will be extracted from our conference proceedings supplemented by further research. These papers may be on subjects such as Support System for Single Seniors; Bereavement Counseling; Resolving Family Conflicts faced by Senior Immigrants.

***Develop a Viable and Strong Financial Base:**

In order to fulfill the goals and assist a wider senior community NIAASC is in need of a viable and strong financial base, so that it can have its own office with some professional staff.

Some Questions Recently Raised:

Q. What is the difference between Social Security disability and SSI disability?

A. The Social Security Administration is responsible for two major programs that provide benefits based on disability: Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), which is based on prior work under Social Security, and Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Under SSI, payments are made on the basis of financial need. Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) is financed with Social Security taxes paid by workers, employers, and self-employed persons. To be eligible for a Social Security benefit, the worker must earn sufficient credits based on taxable work to be "insured" for Social Security purposes. Disability benefits are payable to blind or disabled workers, widow(er)s, or adults disabled since childhood, who are otherwise eligible. The amount of the monthly disability benefit is based on the Social Security earnings record of the insured worker.

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) is a program financed through general revenues. SSI disability benefits are payable to adults or children who are disabled or blind, have limited income and resources, meet the living arrangement requirements, and are otherwise eligible. The monthly payment varies up to the maximum federal benefit rate, which may be supplemented by the State or decreased by countable income and resources.

Q. How to Replace Medicare Card

A. If your Medicare card is stolen, damaged or lost, you can request a replacement Medicare card online. To make your online request, you will need:

Your name as it appears on your most recent Social Security card,

Your Social Security Number, and Your date of birth

The address for this service is <http://www.socialsecurity.gov/medicarecard/>

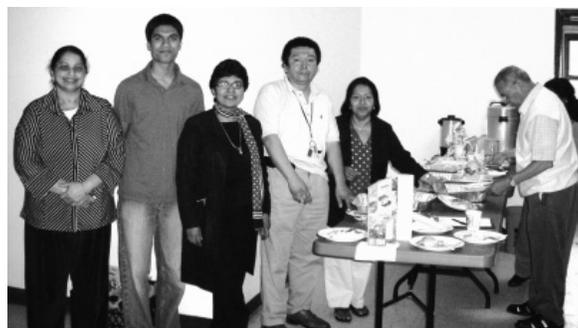
Your Medicare card will arrive in the mail in about 30 days. If you prefer, or if you are unable to use the online request to obtain a replacement Medicare card, call the toll-free number, 1-800-772-1213. Representatives there will be glad to help you. You can also visit a local office. For the office closest to you try the Field Office Locator.

NEWS ABOUT SOME ONGOING SENIOR PROGRAMS:

NIAASC was invited by the United Hindu Cultural Council Senior Center (UHCCSC) in South Ozone Park, New York on June 11, 2009. NIAASC President MK Ramasubramanian, Vice President Dr. Ashwin Pandya and Executive Director Rajeshwar Prasad attended the event. The event was graced by a number of special guests including Commissioner Lilliam Barrios of the Department for the Aging (DFTA), New York City.



Prasad speaking at the UHCCSC event on June 11, with Chan Jamana and invited guests.



Volunteers of India Home ready to serve lunch at the Kerala Center



DFTA Commissioner Barrios (in dark suit) joins seniors at UHCCSC in folk dancing



Ramasubramanian speaking at the UHCCSC event on June 11



Lunch Break at the Senior Program run by India Home at the Kerala Center in Elmont

After attending the above event NIAASC representatives also visited the Senior Program run by India Home at the Kerala Center in Elmont. They also met organizers at the Senior Program at the Hindu Temple in Flushing, New York. These visits were very informative and educational and the right step after the NIAASC Workshop on Networking. Dr. Aswhin Pandya also visited the new program initiated just a few months back in the Clinton Martin Park in New Hyde Park.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS BY NIAASC

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DATE	TITLE (S) OF CONFERENCE/WORKSHOP
September 26, 1998	Problems and Issues Faced by Elders and Services available for elderly (specific issues and aspirations of Indian Americans); Entitlement programs, Long Term Care
April 29, 2000	Medicare and Medicaid Basics; Issues and Services for Seniors, Unique Issues of Indian Seniors; Strategies for Developing Senior Citizen Centers.
November 11, 2000	In-Family Conflicts and Compromises Faced by Immigrant Seniors
November 10, 2001	Issues Related to Housing for Seniors including Assisted Living; Issues Related to Transportation, Medicaid and Respite Care for Seniors and their Families.
November 02, 2002	Elder Law and Its Implications to Seniors
April 26, 2003	Advocacy Workshop: Crucial Points in Advocacy; Community Perspective in Advocacy
November 1, 2003	Housing Opportunities for Seniors
August 22, 2004	Brainstorming Session on "Planning, Development and Administration of Senior Housing Complexes."
October 30, 2004	Social and Cultural Interventions and Elderly Abuse
October 29, 2005	Interactive Discussion Among Ongoing Indo-American Senior Programs in NY/NJ/CT
June 11, 2006	Overseas Citizenship of India
October 28, 2006	Financial Planning and Management for Seniors, and How Public and Nonprofit Organizations can work cooperatively together
April 29, 2007	Issues of Single Seniors: Focus on Bereavement Support System Retirement Housing for Seniors of Indian Origin
October 27, 2007	Single Seniors: Retirement Housing- Progress in Florida
April 19, 2008	Home Health Care for Seniors, and Reverse Mortgage
October 25, 2008	Overseas Citizenship of India A Dialogue Among Ongoing Senior Programs
May 30, 2009	Networking Among Ongoing Indo-American Senior Programs

These conferences and workshops coupled with active collaborative efforts with other organizations have resulted in positive outcomes: Such as (a) Start-up of A Retirement Community -- ShantiNiketan, in Tavares, Florida, (near Orlando) developed by a not-for-profit entity. (b) Start up of a singles senior group spurred by addressing special and unique needs and concerns of this group that deserves a dignified and compassionate understanding; (c) Covering issues such as Health Proxy, Durable Power of Attorney and other "End of Life" issues, people have taken a note of their importance thereby resulting in practical steps of preparing necessary documents.

Overall, we believe, as a result of NIAASC's initiatives Indian Organizations' sensitivity to senior's concerns has been broadly enhanced.

EDITORIAL

We are devoting this editorial to the “OMBUDSMAN “ Program. There was a brief presentation on the program by Mr. Basant Kohli, NIAASC member, at our Workshop and people showed interest in the subject.

Ombudsman is a Swedish word that means “citizen representative.” This representation can apply to any area: insurance, education, small business group, and health care industry. We are covering here ‘Long-Term Care Ombudsman.’

The primary duty of an ombudsman is protecting the rights of individuals by doing inquiries and resolving problems and grievances; providing information; and working with the long-term institution such as nursing home. The ombudsman handles problems related to the rights of recipients of long-term services; concerns about the care and treatment provided such as admission, drugs etc.; problems with cost or Medicare and Medicaid benefits; to alert persons to health care fraud and abuse; and to help educate the community about services. Ombudsman can help on issues such as Guardianship or Power of Attorney. The complainant could be a recipient or potential recipient of long-term care services; could be relative or friend of the recipient of service.

There are volunteer opportunities with the Log-Term Care Ombudsman program. A volunteer ombudsman can make unannounced weekly visits to an assigned institution. The person who wishes to volunteer is one who cares about elderly and disabled people; has a desire to help people living in nursing homes, assisted living etc.; and wants to make a difference. The person needs to pass a criminal background check. An Ombudsman must be trained and certified: in Wisconsin state one has to attend a mandatory 6-hour initial training; and in New York 36 hours of training which leads to certification from the NY State Office for the Aging. Then there are continuing education sessions. The person interested should contact the Volunteer Director in the institution and both have to mutually agree to the assignment.

NIAASC 2009 Board of Directors:

OFFICERS: President: M. K Ramasubramanian (mkram38@hotmail.com) **Vice Presidents:** Meena Modak (Memodak@aol.com) and Ashwin Pandya, MD (Apandya880@hotmail.com) **Secretary:** P. Ramaswamy Mohan (mohans49@yahoo.com) **Treasurer:** Satpal Malhotra, (paul_malhotra@yahoo.com) **Executive Director:** Rajeshwar Prasad (prasadraj@aol.com)
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National Indo-American Association
For Senior Citizens (NIAASC)
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The NIAASC editorial board wishes to acknowledge with gratitude and appreciation all who have either contributed for this newsletter or have provided resources for it.