

NATIONAL INDO-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR SENIOR CITIZENS Inc. (NIAASC)

Office: 1824 Fairfax Street, Elmont, NY 11003 Mailing: 7 Roberta Avenue, Farmingville, NY 11738
Web site: www.niaasc.org E-mail: niaasc@aol.com Telephone: 1866-6-niaasc (1-866-664-2272)

CONFERENCE ON SINGLE SENIORS & RETIREMENT HOUSING

Held on April 29, 2007

Morning Session:

ISSUES OF SINGLE SENIORS: FOCUS ON BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

Afternoon Session

RETIREMENT HOUSING FOR SENIORS OF INDIAN ORIGIN

The National Indo-American Association for Senior Citizens (NIAASC) had its 13th Conference on Sunday, April 29, 2007 at the Vaishnav Community Center in New Hyde Park, Long Island. It was undertaken in collaboration with Indo-American Senior Citizen Center of New York and the Indian American Kerala Cultural and Civic Center. About 75 participants attended this full-day conference and the interaction on both the above issues evidenced the success and satisfaction of all participants.

Immediately following the breakfast, formal presentations commenced, and the conference coordinator, **Mr. Rajeshwar Prasad**, Executive Director of NIAASC, requested participants to observe one-minute silence in memory of Virginia Tech's 32 innocent victims, including two Indians, who were shot dead by a student who committed suicide. He also requested to remember **Romesh Tewari**, NIAASC Board member and former Treasurer, who died on March 13, 2007. **Dr. Ashwin Pandya**, NIAASC President, welcomed all on behalf of NIAASC as well as on behalf of the Vaishnav Community Center.

[Bios of Guest speakers appear at the end of the write-up](#)

Guest Speakers for the morning session, **Patricia Walsh Perez, APRN, BC**, psychotherapist, Bereavement Consultant, and Wellness Psychologist, and **Rose V. Bruy, LMHC, NCC**, Consultant to the New York City Board of Education, were introduced by NIAASC Vice President, **MK Ramasubramanian**. Their excellent and comprehensive presentations on **"Issues of Single Seniors with Focus on Bereavement Support System"** with handout packages and visual explanation, were very well received and invited an intensive and emotional interaction among all participants. Ms. Perez handed out a detailed resource directory of bereavement services that included General Sources, Hospital-based Groups, Special Focus Groups, and County-based Bereavement Support Groups. The session moderated by Dr. Pandya provided impetus to all and that Indian American seniors should take steps to develop a resource entity for their benefit.

Ms. Perez identified differences between Grief, Mourning and Bereavement and elaborated on practical reactions to loss. She continued "Grief is the natural response to letting go of someone we love very much." Common reactions to grief are emotional, physical and behavioral. Emotional reactions may include many facets such as sadness, guilt, despair, anger, bitterness; physical reactions may include deep sighing, decrease in activity, sleep disturbances, neglect of self, increased blood pressure; and behavioral reactions could include crying, seeking solitude, seeking forgiveness, searching for what was lost, detachment from surroundings. She indicated that grief is expressed differently by each individual, and mourning is impacted by social, cultural, religious background of each individual.

Ms. Bruy, complementing the presentation of Ms. Perez, related a story from the publication "Old Pig" where a grandmother and granddaughter explaining to one another what was happening on 'Living and Loving as well as Giving and Taking' The picture presentation covered the entire cycle: Beginning, Living and Ending. Participants, many of them having gone through their personal losses, admired both the presentations and asked specific questions. The speakers handled interactive portion, which at times was very emotional, in a very professional manner with a great solace to all.

Mr. Prasad alluded to a recent study by Yale University on grieving and hurting. The study has been published in the Journal of American Medical Association. It studied 233 people 80 percent of whom had recently lost a spouse. NIAASC will make efforts to get the study and post it on its web site for the benefit of seniors.

The afternoon sessions addressed by **Mr. Iggy Ignatius MBA** from Lansing Michigan was on **“Retirement Housing for Seniors of Indian Origin.”** **Dr. Samir K. Dutta**, NIAASC Vice President introduced the speaker and **Mr. Ramaswamy Mohan MBA**, NIAASC Board member moderated the session. Ignatius who had direct experience in real estate field in USA, and had done pioneering work on Time-Sharing in India, focused that he and his wife, Shanti, have decided to undertake this ambitious project on a not for profit basis and volunteer their 100% time to make it a success. It was their first formal presentation in their pursuit to seek input from seniors and different organizations throughout USA. Their vision is to build **“Bharat Vilas”** in a complex of some 25 acres where retirees could rent or have a condo. The complex will have 8 Vilas in a circle around a Club House with swimming pool and other community facilities in the center. Symbolically it will be like a pizza with eight slices. Each Vila could accommodate 10 residents with three double bedrooms and four single bedrooms. The radials from the Vilas will have 80 condos that will be more like independent living. There will be maid services in each Vila and condo owners could also take advantage of this service. The focus is on Adult Community. There is also a possibility that some units could be occupied by other ethnic groups. Iggy also elaborated on legal, zoning, fair housing laws and other implications which will be considered during the development process. During his input-gathering tour Ignatius will be specifically asking participants to give their suggestions on the following major components; each component having several subcomponents:

- Is there a Need?
- Where is the Need?
- What kind of Housing?
- What kind of Food?
- Who should be allowed to Join? and
- At what Cost?

His power point presentation was followed by a video where he showed how the Vila look like from outside and inside and how the complex would look like from an aerial point? Based on preliminary estimate Ignatius predicted that a resident could rent in a Vila for \$750.00 per month that will include rent, food, maid services, utilities and maintenance. The condos will be based on specific need basis. During the question/answer session participants expressed general satisfaction with the project and they also provided some useful suggestions. Ignatius distributed a booklet on “Bharat Vilas” and was pleased with the response. He said it was the beginning!

The event also included brief presentations from collaborators: **Chandubhai Patel** from Indo-American Senior Citizen Center of New York, and **EM Stephen**, Executive Director and **Jose Chumar**, President of Indian American Kerala Cultural and Civic Center. Comments were also made about other ongoing senior programs: **Nirmala Ramasubramanian** from Hindu Temple Society of North America, **Chandrakant Shah** from Jain Temple, **Chan Jamoona** from United Hindu Cultural Council Senior Center, **Avinash Suri** from India association of Long Island, **Ardaman Singh Madan** from Guru Gobind Singh Senior Center.

Usha Foods provided vegetarian buffet lunch, and the Vaishnav Temple Senior program recognized all senior programs and guest speakers with a symbolic bouquet of flowers. **Mr. Satpal Malhotra**, NIAASC Secretary, proposed a Vote of Thanks. The event was covered by ITV and the reporter interviewed about half a dozen community leaders including guest speakers. The channel 57 TV also covered the event.

GUEST SPEAKERS:

Patricia Walsh Perez, APRN, BC, BCBT, BCETS, CT

Patricia Walsh Perez is an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse, Board Certified in Adult Psychiatric/Mental Health Nursing. Ms. Perez has a private practice in East Setauket, which consists primarily of individuals and families in need of counseling for issues of complicated bereavement and

trauma. Ms. Perez has established the bereavement program for the Visiting Nurse Service and Hospice of Suffolk. This bereavement program provides groups for adults, adolescents and children. Ms. Perez has been the bereavement consultant for various agencies over the past twenty years, providing specialized workshops, community workshops and professional training. Ms. Perez is a Diplomate with the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress and holds certification in Bereavement Trauma and Traumatic Stress Management. Ms. Perez also is Board Certified in Thanatology by the Association of Death Education and Counseling. Ms. Perez was the co-founder and past-president of the Long Island Chapter of the Association of Death and Education Counseling.

Rose V. Bruy, LMHC, NCC

Rose Bruy is a Guidance Counselor with the New York City Department of Education 75 Guidance Counselor, Special Education and Service since 1980; and for the last about two years also serving as a professional member for Service Delivery. Ms. Bruy holding MS in Guidance Counseling and another Master in Psychology from New York University has major responsibilities in her present positions such as Assessment and Diagnosis of Crisis Situations, Interaction and Synopsis through professional collaboration, Network and Referral when indicated. She has also been actively involved with assessment and diagnostic evaluation of children with autism, provision of counseling to young adults with mental retardation, and to children with varying levels of emotional disorder.

Besides her two Masters, Ms. Bruy has also Grief Counseling Certification from Brooklyn College and also holds professional accreditation as licensed Mental Health Counselor, licensed Guidance Counselor, New York City, as well as Certified Guidance Counselor from New York State.. Ms. Bruy is affiliated with National Board of Certified Counselors, and Association of Death Educators and Counselors.

Iggy Ignatius MBA:

Graduated with BE from Birla Institute of Technology & Science and MBA, USA . After graduating in 1982, Mr. Ignatius joined as a consultant in New York with a small consulting firm, and worked with companies like Time, American Express, Citibank etc.

After about 3 years he qualified himself as a real estate agent and dabbled in real estate, buying and selling properties in the New Jersey area. Three years later in 1988, he and his family decided to move to India to set up a business on their own. In 1989 they formed IGGI Resorts International and started building resorts all over South India, expanding into North India. Besides Sterling Resorts and Dalmia Resorts, they were one of the pioneers of the Time Sharing industry in India. Later they entered into the field of building rest areas with Motels under the IGGI Motels banner and both the companies were traded in the Madras and Bombay Stock Exchanges. In 1996 in the Asian Financial crisis in India, they lost all their investments. The family moved back to the US and started their career from scratch. After working for General Motors as a consultant for 3 years, they started WEBPAK, a software development company in Michigan. About two years back, they decided to follow their long time dream of building retirement homes for Indians as a non-profit organization. They hope to spend the next year going around the country to determine the exact nature of the need for such retirement homes. That brings them here to the New York to present their vision for the project and fine tune the same based on the feedback they receive. NIAASC Workshop is the first one they are venturing in this process.