

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

In the creation of NIAASC, names of these organizations come in the forefront: Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO); National Asian Pacific Center on Aging (NAPCA) based in Seattle, WA, Indian American Kerala Cultural and Civic Center based in Elmont, New York, and National Federation of Indian American Associations. In 1998, a well-known community leader, Mr. Inder Singh in California, was chosen to serve on the Board of Directors of NAPCA. NAPCA, was an established organization working with seniors, primarily from Korea, Vietnam, & Japan. Inder Singh proposed that NAPCA should expand itself to include Indian Americans, a very active community. Clayton Fong, executive director of NAPCA agreed. Contacts were made with GOPIO and its President Thomas Abraham called a dinner meeting of Indian Community leaders, primarily from New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. Others attending the meeting were Clayton Fong and Ellen Bhang, NAPCA Project Coordinator. For about four hours, these leaders were given detailed information about NAPCA by Mr. Fong and Ms. Bhang, and they showed willingness to help the Indian community. NAPCA at that time was working in 40 states, including New York. At the end of the dinner meeting, a task Force of ten community leaders was formed to carry the task from that point on, by first calling a conference of Indian community leaders to make an assessment of needs and aspirations of the Indian American seniors in the USA. The group asked Mr. Rajeshwar Prasad, to head this Task Force. The Task Force met regularly every two weeks at the Kerala Center. It supported the concept of having a full-day conference under the auspices of GOPIO at the Kerala Center on September 26, 1998.

The conference was sponsored by NAPCA and Prakash Parekh, Esq., publisher of News India Times, an Indian Weekly Newspaper which supported the conference financially by donating \$500.00. Among the professional speakers were Rena Iacono, Nassau County Commissioner of the department of Senior Citizen Affairs, Vincent Serio from Social Security Administration, Steve Ellis Vice President of Travelers, Purushottam Karra, President of Indo-American Citizens Association of New Jersey State, Thomas Abraham, Ellen Bhang, and Lani Sanjek from New York Statewide Senior Council. Other participants included Professors Jagat Motwani, Ashakant Nimbark, and Sushila Gidwani. The subjects covered were areas of concern to seniors and an overview of different aspects from professionals. Among the audience were community leaders who got actively involved in interactive discussion that made the conference very productive.

With the help of NAPCA, Mr. Prasad coordinated the conference under the auspices of GOPIO in September, 1998 and urged 10 Task Force members to meet regularly to develop an organization to put in concrete format the deliberations of the conference. It

took about four months to develop such an organization *NIAASC—National Indo American Association of Senior Citizens*, a not-for-profit entity under section 501C3 of IRS.

The first conference under the auspices of NIAASC was held on April 29, 2000 which covered subjects such as Medicare and Medicaid Basics; Issues and Services for Seniors; Unique Issues of Indian American Seniors; Strategies for Developing Senior Citizen Centers. In this regard, in November 2000, NIAASC developed a brochure of “Guidelines — “How to Set Up Senior Citizen Program”. The brochure covered these areas: a) who is a Senior; b) Seniors in the NIAASC; c) What is a Senior Citizen Program; d) Process of Developing a Senior Citizen Program; e) Phases of a Senior Citizen Program; f) Role of NIAASC in Senior Programs. In developing the brochure, NIAASC sought the help of Anita McCauley, a well-known community leader in Long Island; Ellen Bhang and Yolanda Sanchez of NAPCA; and members of the Task Force. It was clearly stated in the Constitution and Bylaws of NIAASC that its mission and objectives will be limited to: Information, Referral, and Advocacy.

NIAASC also recognized that senior programs are likely to be initiated under one of the three avenues:

- a) within the confines of a new entity;
- b) within the confines of an existing Indian organization;
- c) or within the confines of an Area Agency on Aging (AAA)\*\*.

*\*\*An AAA is a federally funded entity, designated through the State Unit on Aging. An AAA is normally operated at the County level and contracts with a host of organizations, mostly nonprofit, for various services to seniors.*

So far NIAASC has organized 31 conferences and workshops. Issues covered included: Problems and Issues Faced by Elders and Services Available for Seniors; Entitlement Programs (Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid); In-Family Conflicts and Compromises Faced by Immigrant Seniors; Issues Related to Housing for Seniors, including Assisted Living; Issues Related to Transportation; Respite Care, Elder Law and Its Implications to Seniors; Advocacy and Its Crucial Points for Indian Seniors; Housing Opportunities and Choices for Seniors; Aspects In Planning, Development, and Administration of Senior Housing Complexes; Social and Cultural Interventions and Elderly Abuse; Interactive Discussions and Networking among On-going Indian American Senior Programs; Overseas Citizenship of India; Financial Planning and Management for Seniors, and How Public and Nonprofit Organizations can work Cooperatively Together; Issues of Single Seniors; Focus on Bereavement Support System; Retirement Housing for Indian Seniors; Home Health Care for Seniors; Reverse Mortgage; Inter-Generational Issues Impacting Seniors; Essential Financial and Legal Tools for Seniors; Aging in Place (instead of moving to another place); Affordable Care Act; Healthy Aging; Future of Aging in the Changing World; Health Care Advances for Seniors; All About AARP; Development of Senior Centers in Greater Chicago; and Impact of COVID-19 on Seniors.

For more information go to the NIAASC Website and look at the conferences held and Articles of Interest.

