

IACA Festival Of India Draws Huge Crowds

BY MAHADEV DESAI & VEENA RAO

Atlanta: India American Cultural Association (IACA) organized its signature gala 13th annual Festival of India, to celebrate India's 62nd Independence Day, at the Gwinnett Center on Saturday, August 15, 2009.

The theme of the Festival this year was to

the stage for the 'Cultural Show' was also in the same hall as it drew more public to the booths.

The Cultural Show: This year's riveting show from 9.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m. showcased talents of about 150 participants, dressed in colorful Indian costumes. The day opened with a prayer and song from the Prajna group. This was followed by melodious singing by Sujatha Rayburn and

Bahl escorted councilman Kwanza Hall, (Atlanta City Council, District 2), Judy Forte, (National Park Service), and Doug Shipman (Executive Director, Center for Civil & Human Rights) around the hall.

Kwanza Hall commented, "It means a lot for the City of Atlanta to have a meaningful and fruitful partnership with IACA." Doug Shipman remarked, "The American Civil Rights Movement would not have happened without inspiration from the

racers, and quiz competitions. there were art competitions, handwriting and essay competitions.

Rebecca Kelly, Co-Founder of The Cat's Meow (TCM), a Life Enrichment Center, conducted an Essay Competition.

Like last year, Chand Akkineni was assigned 'fund raising' while Paddy Sharma and Tushar Sanghvi handled the booths. The Registration Team under Vishal Mehta did an excellent job.

IACA president Dr. Ananth Kamath and Rallapalli thanked all the sponsors, IACA Board and Executive Committee; FOI Committee and Sanatan Mandir Committee members, Gwinnett Center Team, Vibha and American Cancer Society, vendors, volunteers and participants for making the Festival a huge success.



IACA officials with Greg Pridgeon, Josephine Tan, Diana Preston and Sam Olens. Photo by Gita Kotecha.

fuse together the spirit and heritage of Indian community's land of origin (India) with the adopted land (USA). This was accomplished by the "Flame of Independence" kick off at the Gandhi Statue, near the M.L.K.Jr. National Historic Site and King Center. The event was presented in partnership with Gandhi Foundation USA (GFUSA), National Park Service, King Center, Vibha and various other community organizations

"This year the symbolic flame has taken on a historic role linking American Independence with Indian Independence and beginning at the historic site that embodies the Civil Rights Movement" said FOI Program Director, Padma Rallapalli. IACA along with GFUSA was honored to receive the Proclamation from the Atlanta City Council at the Council Meeting on July 6. After the "Flame of Independence" was ceremoniously lit by Padma Rallapalli and King Center's Mr. Farris, it traveled from the Gandhi Statue to East Cobb, Johns Creek, Lilburn and Jonesboro over a five week period and was received amidst patriotic fervor and jubilation at the Gwinnett Center in a grand finale.

Booths in the Main Hall: According to FOI's committee member Chand Akkineni, despite the economic downturn, all the 60 booths were taken up by vendors selling Indian apparel, jewelry, toys and games (even Cricket!), insurance, travel, medical, cable and money transfer services, etc.; not-for-profit religious and professional membership organizations, and media outlets. Atlanta's popular restaurants Madras Grill, Saravanaa Bhavan, Moksha and Udupi Café did brisk business selling mouthwatering food and beverages. The booth-renters were happy that

team. The items with Classical component in it were a treat to listen to. Throughout the day, young performers presented a mix of Bollywood, traditional folk and fusion dances, songs, Comedy; martial arts and game shows. There were innovative items like 'family gol maal' and 'Anthakshari' and the "So you think you can

Indian Independence movement," and assured that he would do his best to nurture the partnership with IACA.

The following dignitaries at the Festival were bestowed with "Friends of India (FOI)" award for their support to the Indian community by participating in the Independence Torch ceremonies in their respective countries. After thanking IACA for the awards, each awardee commented briefly:

Doug Shipman - Executive Director of Center for Civil and Human Rights said, "The American Civil Rights Movement would not have happened without inspiration from the Indian Independence movement," and assured that he would do his best to nurture the partnership with IACA.

Sam Olens - Chairman - Cobb County Board of Commissioners, commented, "The community and country are stronger when we work together."

Diana Preston - Mayor of Lilburn, said she was very happy to attend the Festival, "I have had the opportunity to know more about Indian culture, food, traditions and values. The school system has brought in wonderful students from your community and I know that with them, our future is secure."

Greg Pridgeon - Chief of Staff to Atlanta Mayor Franklin, congratulated the IACA for hosting the Festival and assured the attendees, "I've had the pleasure of working closely with the Indian community for many years, and will continue to do so."

Josephine Tan - Chairperson, Asian American Commission for A New Georgia, said, "I speak on behalf of Gov. Sonny Perdue. The Indian American community is one of the best communities we have worked with. We look forward to working with you in future."

Kid Fest: The children were kept engaged and entertained by Devanand Kondur and Leena Joshi. In addition to activities like bead making, lemon and spoon



Guests at the NRI Pulse booth: L to R: Surinder Bahl, Kwanza Hall, Judy Forte, Doug Shipman and Mrs. Kamath with NRI Pulse editor Veena Rao (center). Photo by Navami Naik (ACS).

dance". Bollywood Quiz competitions were a huge hit. The whole program was confidently emceed by Pallavi, Pooja, Neha, Anu and Krishnaveni. The hugely entertaining spectacle ended with an open karaoke session. The Cultural Show area was jam-packed by an appreciative public, who applauded several captivating folk dances including, Lambadi, scintillating Raas by GA Tech team and Oriya; pulsating beats of high voltage bhangra by UGA team; the veena ensemble and the classical Hindustani and patriotic songs. Kudos to the cultural committee team of Anu Nathan, Nivedita Garabadu and Atlanta's well known performing arts promoter Syam Yellamraju.

The Festival was graced by the presence of Atlanta's leading public dignitaries. In the morning, IACA, Board of Directors Chairman, Surinder

"Green Wonder" Slated For Launch In Palitana



BY VIREN MAYANI

Atlanta: Inspired by Acharya Chandanaji, Veerayatan-Palitana will house, perhaps the world's first contemporary, multi-dimensional and technology infused; environment-sustainability museum. Based on "ahimsa" (non-violence) and void of any religious, caste, creed, appearance, age or gender discrimination, "Veerayatan" has for the past 38 years, diligently served the nature's devastated.

The Conception: Bhagwan Shri Mahavirswami's discourses communicate that it is only by preserving nature that we will be able to save our species. It is this theme that is elaborately presented at Veerayatan-Palitana. Life size, moving and communicating mannequins will narrate the transformation of human life-form over the ages and stress the need for co-existence with nature.

Of the 100 acres of land required for this project, 48 acres has already been acquired and another 16 acres will be added shortly. There is an unprecedented willingness by people, power and process to help this project and thus within a week, 16M Rupees were raised. The total development is tagged at 100M and includes: boating with a forest experience, a laser-show theater, sustainability museum, vocational training centers, micro-climate management, water cascades and much more.

Veerayatan's construction is slated to commence in September 2009 and take approximately 500 days for completion in 2011. Acharya Chandanaji is committed to staying in Palitana, to oversee it. Besides displaying the fully interactive Environmental - Sustainability origins of Jainism, it will train the local adults in vocational skills necessary to maintain a respectful life. The Center: will provide a modern / engaging teaching structure and a better understanding of

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