

Five Indo-American Achievers honoured



CONNECTICUT – At a packed Stamford Italian Center, the Connecticut Chapter of the Global Organization of People of Indian Origin (GOPIO) honored five Indo-American achievers and those provide service to the community or the society at large. Several dignitaries attended the event including India’s Consul General in New York Dnyaneshwar Mulay, Rep Jim Himes (D, CT 4th District), Stamford Mayor David Martin, Norwalk Mayor Harry Rilling, New Jersey State Assembly Speaker Upendra Chivukula and Connecticut Assemblyman Dr. Prasad Srinivasan.

The program started with a welcome by GOPIO-CT President Shelly Nichani who said the chapter initiated several new programs including a cancer walk fundraiser, participation in the Thanksgiving Day Parade in Stamford, interactive sessionS with elected officials in addition to the regular programS such as sponsoring and volunteering in soup kitchens, India Independence Day flag hoisting and Diwali. Stamford Mayor David Martin extended a warm welcome to everyone and complimented GOPIO-CT for its outstanding community work. This year, GOPIO-CT had selected U.S. Representative from Connecticut 4th District Congressman Jim Himes as Friend of India. A member of India Caucus, Jim has been a supporter of Indian American community. Congressman Himes had travelled several times to India while he was working for Goldman Sachs. As a Congressman Himes is committed to provide all children in America, access to a first-rate public school, affordable and effective health care, a decent and safe home, and a supportive community. An undergraduate from Harvard, Jim earned a Rhodes Scholarship, and attended Oxford University in England.

There Indian Americans are honored for their achievements in business and profession. Dr. Subbarao Bollepalli, MD FAPA, is honored for his achievement in medicine. Dr. Bollepalli is a leading psychiatrist in the State of Connecticut. He retired as a Colonel from United States Army Reserve, which was activated during the Iraqi War. He is a member of the Governing Council of Connecticut Medical Society(CSMS). He is currently the President of Connecticut Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (CAPI). His interests include philanthropy, social service, spiritual reading and playing tennis.

A husband and wife team in business, Ashok and Meera Vasudevan, have been selected to receive entrepreneurship award. Ashok is 'corporateur' turned entrepreneur who has co-founded with his wife Meera, Preferred Brands International, which makes Tasty Bite, a leader in the specialty food industry. He is the CEO of Tasty Bite and serves also on the Board of several NGOs both in India and the US. He is the Adjunct Professor of International Entrepreneurship of Great Lakes Institute of Management in Chennai, India. Ashok attended the University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, Bajaj Institute Bombay and the Harvard Business School. Meera Vasudevan is a co-founder and Principal of ASG-Omni, a strategy-consulting firm that designs and develops entry strategies for large US corporations looking to do business in India. She has also worked closely on social research projects with the Indian government and UNICEF. She has a Bachelor in English with post-graduate qualifications in Marketing from the University of Madras and INSEAD, France.

Arati Sureddi received an award for young achievers. Arati is the Founder of Lotus Alliance, a social enterprise addressing human trafficking and forced labor through the responsible tourism industry. She has also helped in launching the Not My Life Awareness Initiative, whose goal is to increase awareness of human trafficking among individuals who are in a position to influence policy and advocate for change. She is a graduate of Boston University's School of Management.

Prasad Chirnomula, an avid restaurateur, received a special award for promoting India cuisine to American society by helping community groups through media. Chirnomula creates delectable and imaginative food in each of his four Thali restaurants and Mexican in his latest venture – Oaxaca Kitchen. In addition to running his five restaurants, Chef Prasad leads tasting tours of India, hosts private tasting dinners, teaches cooking classes and offers his services at multiple charity events for such groups as the American Liver Foundation, Varli, James Beard House, the American Red Cross, Share Our Strength, the Connecticut Food Bank and the Food Bank for New York City. He has studied at the Food Craft Institute of Poona, including culinary arts and hotel management.