



2022 Spring Newsletter

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Namaste, I hope you are all doing well. Congratulations to all students who recently graduated from High School in Rochester and surrounding areas. We wish you all the best for the future.

ICAM is going to complete 2 years in June 2022, and I am proud to say that the team has accomplished major work during this time. We are in the process of electing new board members for the next 2-year term; my sincere thanks to outgoing board members. The board has decided to continue with myself as President and Nisha Kurup as vice President for next 2 years. Myself & Nisha have accepted these roles to support and mentor new people for leadership roles for the next term. I would request anyone who has passion to serve the community to consider running for the next board election.

This year our top priority continued to keep the community healthy and safe. Along with organizing health online seminar, our major accomplishment was to collaborate with various organizations to host a successful covid vaccination clinic sponsored by Minnesota Department of health and diversity council; you will find details on that in separate article in this newsletter.

Another focus of ICAM this year was to have strong financial support to execute important projects for the community. We received a small grant of \$1,000 from United Way in March 2022 for a commitment to action toward racial justice. In May of 2022, ICAM received a grant of \$3,000 from Rochester Downtown Alliance for hosting an event downtown. This will be our summer event - [ICAM Utsav 2022](#) - Festival of Color and Food Mela on July 30th, 2022. Please see the attached flyer for details. As I am writing this message, I received a note that United way approved grant of \$5,000 for increasing our community's capacity to participate in civic engagement activities. We will write details in the next newsletter.

We will continue our search for enthusiastic individuals to join and help us. If you are interested, please reach out to me, or

INDIAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA (ICAM) PRESENTS

UTSAV 2022

JULY 30TH | SATURDAY | 4:30 - 8:30 PM
PEACE PLAZA | DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER

FESTIVAL OF COLORS

Supported by Rochester Downtown Alliance and Destination Medical Center

5K RUN
DJ MUSIC/DANCE
FOOD MELA
COLOR SPLASH

Register for run and vendors at www.icamn.org or Scan the QR code






anyone on the ICAM team as we always welcome your ideas and suggestions on how we might better serve the community.

Thank you to the board, volunteers, and community members for your continuous support. Please visit our website, icamn.org and subscribe to our mailing list for more information and become an ICAM member.

Best wishes,
Ajay Singh
President, ICAM Board

COVID VACCINATION CLINIC

ICAM hosted a successful COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic at 125 Live, Elton Hills Dr NW, Rochester on April 23, 2022 from 9 AM to 12 PM. This campaign was organized to implement the recommendation of the Health Clinic Webinar that ICAM had staged in February 2022 - a shining example of its outreach operations to Rochester communities as part of Project Healings. Our purpose was to bring the vaccines straight to targeted communities and to showcase vaccination as an effective tool to fight and halt the spread of COVID. This was appealing to people who wanted to avoid the inconveniences of prior registration and queuing up in front of clinics and hospitals. We succeeded in bringing vaccination to our neighborhoods.



Arrangements were made through the Minnesota Department of Health and the MN Homeland Clinic (the key sponsors) to administer all three COVID vaccines, i.e., Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson & Johnson. The first and second doses as well as both booster shots were made available. Facilities were also in place for vaccinating children from five years and up.. A fully equipped mobile team of specialists, experts, and registered nurses were present to administer the vaccine. Vaccinated people were also provided with new COVID passports and also updated existing records. The MDH also updated the Minnesota state health records on the spot. Over 25 people from all walks of life benefited from this vaccination camp.



Separate teams from the Minnesota Department of Health and the MN Homeland Health had joined from Minneapolis to roll out this clinic. The Diversity Council was another major sponsor of this event. The Rochester non-profit, IMAA also supported ICAM's initiative.

Extensive publicity was given to this campaign through posters and flyers at many prominent places and centers of worship in different parts of the city as well as through social media. We had also sought and ensured that popular Rochester

news and visual media like KTTC, Post Bulletin, Rochester Radio, Kaal TV, etc. gave wider publicity to ICAM's COVID Clinic and carried reports.

It was a novel idea to use the COVID platform to reach out to the mainstream population, which would at the same time give publicity and visibility to ICAM's activities. It also provided us an opportunity to promote ICAM's larger mission and vision. The venue was again appropriate to our objective. Live 125 receives daily hundreds of Rochester public, particularly those involved in the society at large like young cultural activists, games and sports enthusiasts, fitness and aerobic groups, youths attending training programs, artistes, seniors, users of the library, and participants at workshops, conferences, etc.

Ajay Singh, President of ICAM, and other office bearers personally supervised the arrangements from early morning. Signboards and posters were placed on curbsides of nearby roads to guide visitors to the Clinic. Young volunteers from the Indian community were also there to support this noble cause. ICAM appreciated the support and services of our youth with participation certificates. ICAM had also made provisions to give refreshments to the visitors at the camp. In appreciation of their participation and support, ICAM rewarded those who received the shots with gift-cards of \$25 each.

We all can feel proud of staging a pivotal event like this, winning the support of both the government and several major institutions. When we compare reports of MDH Clinics in some other cities with single digit turn-out, ours was an exemplary success story. The need for repeating our initiative and valuable experience cannot be overemphasized. Showcasing similar challenges can strengthen ICAM's objectives and to expand its scope. ICAM is blessed with some of the best talents especially in medical and engineering spheres. We have been encouraged to explore replicating our current success to specific sectors like Rochester School District, in order to bring vaccination to all ages, from five and up, for securing our neighborhoods against COVID. As was laid out during our Health Clinic Webinar, it is unknown how long COVID is going to stay as a menace to lives, workplaces and schools. Everyone must, therefore, take it more seriously like Dr Anthony Fauci cautioned on April 27, 2022, "The world is still in a pandemic. There is no doubt about that. Don't anybody get any misinterpretation of that. We are still experiencing a pandemic". ICAM can take pride in our capabilities and resolve ourselves to go many extra miles.

HEALTH SEMINAR

The first ICAM health seminar for 2022 was held virtually on Sunday, February 6, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Three experts presented on timely topics of great relevance to the community. Dr. Rana Chakraborty, MD DPhil (Pediatric Infectious Diseases expert) shared latest information on COVID-19 vaccination for children in his presentation entitled "COVID-19 vaccination and your child? Balancing the risks and benefits against the 24 letters of the Greek alphabet". He described how a pathogen can emerge and evolve to rapidly cause global disease. He shared that in addition to impacting child health directly, the pandemic has had a significant negative and long-lasting impact on child education and development, mental health and socio-economic vulnerability. Dr. Chakraborty's talk highlighted that understanding the pathophysiology of the acute and chronic consequences of SARS-Cov-2 infection will lead to more knowledge of host pathogen interaction and will improve diagnostic and therapeutic approaches in the future. Additionally, public/private pharmaceutical partnerships can deliver effective treatments and prevention approaches in a short time frame.

Dr. Richa Sood, MD MS FACP (women's health expert) delivered a presentation entitled "Menopause: myths and facts". Dr. Sood highlighted various myths regarding menopause in Indian women. She described how Indian women enter menopause sooner by several years and get earlier bone thinning, diabetes and risk of heart disease. Indian women are experiencing breast cancer earlier and experience similar transition symptoms as women of other ethnic groups. She emphasized that symptoms of transition can be easily and safely treated. She reviewed that life in menopause represents almost 1/3 of the total span and menopause is a good time to focus on good self-care, get preventative screens and add life back to the years.

Dr. Bhanuprakash Kolla, MD FRCPsych (Associate Professor of Psychiatry) presented a talk entitled "Depression - a common and treatable illness: a South Asian perspective". Dr. Kolla shared that depression is common and is much more than just sadness. It is highly prevalent in the general population and common in South Asian and immigrant populations as well. The diagnosis is based on clinical assessment and in general no tests are required. Depression is associated with an increased risk of suicide. Dr. Kolla summarized several measures that people can take to reduce the risk of developing depression and that multiple effective treatment options are available.

Dr. Seema Kumar, MD
ICAM health committee

FAREWELL TO OUR PRIEST

It is with mixed feelings that I write this farewell note to our priest Shri Harikrishna Alvakonda. Hari ji has been with us for the past 12 years. For many of you in the community, he is the only priest you have known at our Temple. He has brought a lot of changes and those changes have brought the community to the temple. He has made this a gathering place on festival days and a place we come to pray in peace.

When Hari ji came to us from Chicago in 2010, the Temple was in its infancy. Today we are a stable, self-sustaining institution. The Temple, Hariji, his family, and our community have all grown up together to be where we are today. Hariji's contributions to the growth of the temple have been seminal. Here are a few:

1. Keeping the premises clean and neat and the deities beautifully decorated. His attention to detail is remarkable and can be seen in his "alankaras". This sets up an ambiance ideal for prayer and meditation. We have heard visitors comment on this.
2. Establishing a routine of monthly and annual poojas for all the Deities in the Temple, engaging the community, both in Rochester and surrounding areas, in these events. While this has added to his workload, it has also kept the temple busy. Devotees of individual "ishta devatas" are grateful to Hariji for this.
3. Guiding Temple activities during unusual or one-off events like Bhoomi Pooja, off-site poojas on Temple land, Deity installations and Kalyana Utsav.
4. He has masterfully conducted major deity installation events, including installation of Lord Shiva, Lord Kartikeya and his consorts, and recently Goddess Durga. If it were not for his initiative and guidance, this would not have been accomplished.
5. His initiative in solving logistical issues have helped streamline major events. An example is performing Shiva Ratri Abhisekham and Pooja in batches to accommodate the entire community.
6. He has made requests in earnest and in jest at times about items needed for the various Gods and Goddess. Devotees have listened and have generously donated items purchased in India or in cash or effort to get things done. His devotion and

passion for his job was clear to see and devotees responded to it. He has been a blessing to our Temple.

Hari ji's family joined him when he took over the job as our Priest. His wife, Sudha, has been a great support to Hari ji throughout his stay here. In the early days, Sudha ji spent a lot of time at our Temple helping Hari ji and volunteering in many ways to bring the community together to worship at the Temple. Her Shloka classes were well attended. Even after she started working full-time, Sudha ji continued to help him at major events. Himaja, his daughter came here as a young child and has now graduated from High School as an adult. Hemanth was an infant when the family moved to Rochester. He has grown up in the Temple premises and recently participated as a young Priest in the installation of Goddess Durga. These are unforgettable times, and we will miss our beloved Priest. He has set the bar high for the Temple and his are big shoes to fill for the new Priest who will be taking over from Hari ji.

Hari ji returns to India to be close to his spiritual Master and Guru, Himaja will start college in India, and Hemanth is being prepared to join a Veda Path Shala. We wish Hari ji and his family Bon Voyage and the very best in their new venture on returning to their homeland, India.

Santhi Subramaniam
President, Hindu Samaj Temple

CONTRIBUTE TO SAMARPAN NEWSLETTER

Have a story for our newsletter? We welcome your submissions, including but not limited to – First-person accounts, experiences, stories, essays

- Expert findings, reports on relevant topics
- Opinions, newsworthy insights
- Contributions are welcome from all, especially students and seniors.

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