

APRIL NETWORKING EVENT RECAP: "A Recipe for Success"

By ROSHNI HANNON roshni.hannon@gmail.com

Give me a keyboard and sure I can whip up something tasty, but this writer leaves cooking to the experts. If you live here, then you know and if you don't live here you need to come and see for yourself: Tampa is quickly becoming a 'foodie' paradise. Locally sourced produce and groundbreaking cuisine are the hallmark of Tampa's emerging scene of deliciousness. Last month's networking event was a true melting pot. It was a panel-style discussion with three prominent local restaurateurs. Maryann Ferenc, the CEO of Mise en Place Hospitality Inc, Blake Casper the Chairman of Caspers Company who owns the Oxford Exchange and more than 50 McDonald's franchises across the Bay area, and Scott Pierce the CFO of Frontburner Brands which is affiliated with the Melting Pot and Grillsmith all shared their broad perspectives on the local economy through a food lens. Alexis Muellner of the Tampa Bay Business Journal was the moderator.



Caspers Company Chairman Blake Casper, left, Mise en Place's Maryann Ferenc, and Scott Pierce of Frontburner Brands.

Most people would agree there is a greater hunger for knowledge when it comes to the food we consume, and that is certainly not lost on the restaurant industry. With social media dining has become more about the food we tweet than the food we eat. Food blogs, food forums and food groups in online social networks are numerous. Some function as means to share recipes, others for reviewing restaurants or dining experiences. All three panelists agree that a negative review is nothing to ignore. Social media has revolutionized the way people talk about food and drink, they are very aware of what's in products and they're learning more about ingredients.

The panelists also weighed in on the country's new obsession with fast-casual dining or the "Chipotle Effect" and how it's affecting the way they think about food. Maybe it's the quality of the food, the use of better ingredients, food that is wholesome, a perception of freshness, first-rate decor, fair pricing, fast service,



INDO-US chamber President Jal Irani, left, and Tampa Bay Business Journal Editor Alexis Muellner.

friendly employees, flexible offerings, and a full view of how the food is prepared.

All three panelists also agreed that the "foodie" culture is inviting to empty stomachs all over the nation, and the city has potential to rank in serious tourism dollars with its unique restaurants. All around, it sounds like a recipe for success to me. Now, who's hungry?

Roshni Hannon is the VP of Communications for INDO-US.



Started or starting a new Business?

If you have started a new business or planning to start one, chamber events are perfect places to share experiences and learn from others. Indo-US chamber events and the relationships built there provides access to entrepreneurs, seasoned and successful business people, and an open forum for you to discuss your ideas, expand on them and to collaborate. The events are free and so is the membership. We urge you to come out and be a part of it. Together, the future is ours.



May Networking Event

The Indo-US Chamber is changing things up for its monthly networking event. Instead of the traditional location and a speaker, members and guests will have a chance to spend the entire time networking at The Canopy rooftop lounge which is perched atop the Birchwood property in St. Petersburg.

The Birchwood was originally constructed in 1924 as the Lantern Lane Apartments and the only apartments along Beach Drive facing the waters of Tampa Bay. The Spanish Mission-style building, listed in the National Registry of Historic Places, underwent a renovation of historically accurate dimensions with the addition of two floors.

The Canopy provides an escape from the normal downtown bar scene, perfect for an evening of networking, socializing and building relationships. One drink ticket will be provided and light hors-d'oeuvres will be served. The event is May 20th at 6:30 p.m. The Birchwood is located at 340 Beach Dr NE, St Petersburg, FL 33701.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Raj S. Ambay, MD, DDS

MEET RAJ S. AMBAY, MD, DDS

Raj S. Ambay, MD, DDS, is a board certified plastic surgeon, executive business leader and military veteran. He is the founder of Ambay Plastic Surgery in Tampa, Florida and the co-founder of the Institute of Advanced Breast Reconstruction. His offices and surgical centers are located in Texas, Florida and Dubai. Dr. Ambay is also the Chief Medical Officer for TISTA Corp, a Science and technology company focusing on delivering information technology (IT) and professional services to Federal and State agencies. He is the 2014 recipient of the Presidents award from American Society for Plastic Surgeons for outstanding contribution to the specialty of plastic surgery.

Dr. Ambay sits on the Commercial Ventures Advisory boards of Johns Hopkins University and the University of Maryland (The Alliance) and is a board member of the Indo US Chamber of Commerce. Past board positions include Optum Corp, the nations largest health data analytics firm and a subsidiary of United Healthcare. Other Board positions include being elected as a Trustee of the American Medical Association (AMA), member of the American Dental Association Dental Quality Alliance, AMA Ethics Oversight Board, and member of the Board of Directors, National Board of Medical Examiners®.

Dr. Ambay received training in general surgery from the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, and completed his residency in plastic surgery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has also completed a National Institute of Health Physician Scientist research fellowship and second fellowship in microvascular surgery at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. Dr. Ambay has completed executive education in corporate governance at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. In addition to medicine, Dr. Ambay is a graduate of Northwestern University Dental School and is board certified and licensed to practice dentistry.

Dr. Ambay has over 20 years of experience in public policy and advocacy at the local, state and national levels. In 1993, he was elected to a four-year term as an alderman of a western suburb of Chicago. As a member of the city council, Dr. Ambay served on a number of key committees, and by 1995 he was credited for the conception and implementation of Illinois' first political campaign using the Internet. In 1996, he was the Deputy Chief of Staff to the campaign of the Illinois State Treasurer and later a lobbyist in Washington D.C.

As a lieutenant colonel in the United States Army Reserve (USAR), Dr. Ambay was first called to active duty six months after 911, then again in Iraq and a third time in Afghanistan. He has deployed as a dental officer providing general dentistry and oral surgery as well as a medical officer providing general and trauma surgery in a combat support hospital and later as the chief surgeon in a forward surgical team (FST) to US Special Operation Forces. In addition to campaign medals in Iraq and Afghanistan, Army commendations, and NATO medals, Dr. Ambay has also been awarded the Combat Action Badge for service while being fired upon by enemy insurgents in Afghanistan.

Dr. Ambay is a member of the American College of Surgeons, American Society of Plastic Surgeons, the American Medical Association, and American College of Healthcare Executives. Within these organizations, Dr. Ambay sits on numerous committees including finance, governance, advocacy, audit, patient safety and instructional course committees. His community service and scientific research has been recognized through numerous national awards and council resolutions and has given more than 700 presentations.

Dr. Ambay has been married for 20 years to Aparna Ambay MD, MBA, MPH, a dermatologist in private practice, and they have one daughter.



Upcoming Indo-US Chamber Event:

Business & Networking Event

Date: Wednesday, May 20, 2015

Time: 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

Location: Canopy Rooftop Lounge

The Birchwood

340 Beach Drive NE,

St. Petersburg, FL 33701

This is a FREE event. No RSVP required.

INDO-US CHAMBER MISSION

"To provide an active forum in which Asian American professionals and business owners, through an exchange of ideas, with a unified voice, can communicate, interact, and secure a position within the business industry and become a source of inspiration by promoting professionalism and excellence through education and community involvement."

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