

## A NEW YEAR, A NEW DIRECTION

The strengths and successes of our Chamber come from the people who volunteer their talents and expertise to serve our community with the greatest dedication and passion. The Chamber's Executive Committee is comprised of individuals from diverse professional and personal backgrounds, and that is the foundation of our ability to discuss, debate and implement a wide range of great ideas that, upon fruition, serve our members and community in ways that are beyond measure.

As we transition into the new year, the Executive Committee is excited to announce that it will be expanding its team while preparing to execute plans to grow our Chamber into an institution that more efficiently and effectively serves our membership and community. To strengthen the infrastructure of the Chamber, the Executive Committee will be creating subcommittees with specific goals and duties focused

on increasing the range of educational programs currently offered, strengthening existing partnerships, building strategic alliances with a wide-range of organizations and industries, expanding networking opportunities and facilitating mentorship in more intimate settings.

Being a part of the Executive Committee is a rewarding experience - a great way to serve the community and build relationships that will last a lifetime.

If you would like to contribute to the exciting growth of our Chamber, visit our website at [www.indo-us.org](http://www.indo-us.org) to learn more information about how you can get involved.

**Together, the future is ours...**



**August** – This month was the first of the Chamber's newly implemented quarterly social events, held at Aqua located in The Westin Tampa Bay. Former Indo-US Chamber Board Member, Dr. Akshay "A.K." Desai said a few words about the importance of seizing opportunities to become an active participant in the Tampa Bay community. The social mixer provided members with an opportunity to take networking to the next level and begin forging new relationships in a more informal setting.

**September** – The monthly meeting focused on the topic of "The Mind – The Epicenter of Business, Health, and Life," presented by Dr. Srikumar S. Rao. Dr. Rao is the founder of the Creativity and Personal Mastery (CPM) program, which leans on ancient wisdom traditions adapted for modern-day business executives and corporations.

**October** – The Chamber hosted its 11th Annual Golf Tournament at Cheval Country Club in Tampa. The tournament serves as our sole fundraising event each year, and this year featured a field of 120 golfers, on-course contests, and raffle prize giveaways valued at over \$17,000. The monthly meeting on "The Supreme Court ruling on Health Care Reform and how it affects business owners," was presented by Hill Ward Henderson Shareholder Kristen L. Vignec. Chamber members were able to gain some understanding as to what the new legislation may require from them.

As a reminder, membership in our organization is FREE and we promote the interests of our members hailing from diverse backgrounds, including: small businesses, large corporations, professionals, and entrepreneurs.

We invite you to make valuable connections by attending our monthly business networking meetings held at the headquarters of Homeowners Choice Insurance on the third Wednesday of every month starting at 6:30pm.

**Please visit [www.indo-us.org](http://www.indo-us.org) or send an email to [info@indo-us.org](mailto:info@indo-us.org) to become a member and learn more about the organization's lasting impact within the local Tampa Bay community.**

## INDO-US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ANNUAL RECAP



To those readers less familiar, the Chamber is founded on the principle that one learns the most from those who share similar experiences. As such, we provide an open forum for Asian American professionals and business owners to exchange business ideas, obtain referrals, and in general gain access to a dynamic network of peers.

In addition to the Chamber's two annual events – The Banyan Ball and the Golf Tournament, the organization strives to bring its members new innovative speakers at each monthly business and networking meeting.

As a recap to a successful 2012, here are the Chamber's highlights and achievements for the year:

**January** – The Chamber hosted a panel on "Healthcare and Cost Containment Strategies," with three experts in the field leading the discussion:

- Mike Masters, Covenant Services Group
- Corey Lilburn, Senior Broker at Alltrust Insurance, and
- Dr. Rahul Mehra, Principal and CEO of Mehra Vista Health

**February** – On February 17-19, the Chamber presented the 3rd India International Film Festival (IIFF), held at Channelside Cinemas in Tampa. Aimed at promoting awareness of Indian cinema and culture in the Tampa Bay community, the three-day festival featured more than 20 films, features, and documentaries from throughout India and the world, complete with filmmaker Q&A sessions and an opening night V.I.P. reception. This year also saw the addition of an annual weekend film festival school and workshops.

**March** – The monthly meeting featured the topic of "What to expect for the Republican National Convention," presented by Matt Becker, Chief Operating Officer of the 2012 Tampa Bay Host Committee, Inc. As a non-partisan entity, Mr. Becker discussed the scale of business opportunities potentially available to the local community during

the RNC in Tampa from Aug. 27-30, 2012.

**April** – The Chamber was proud to host Hillsborough County District 2 Commissioner Victor Crist at the monthly business and networking meeting. Mr. Crist spoke about his prior experience representing northern Hillsborough County in the Florida Legislature. Members were also able to learn more about structured speed networking.

**May** – The Chamber hosted its annual soiree, The Banyan Ball, at the Crowne Plaza Tampa Westshore. The elegant black-tie event was a sold-out affair, and attracted 300 local community leaders and guests. Suneet Singh Tuli, CEO of Datawind Ltd., served as the evening's keynote speaker and addressed the audience on the topic, "An Entrepreneurial Journey: Solutions Through Adversity." The evening also featured the Chamber's customary awards ceremony to recognize businesspersons, companies, and community leaders that are emerging in the Tampa Bay region.

**June** – The monthly meeting featured the topic, "Sifting through the JOBS Act: Who Benefits, How, and When?" presented by Steven Vazquez, Partner at Foley & Lardner LLP.

**July** – The monthly meeting focused on how to improve your chances of securing commercial financing in today's economy. Members were afforded the opportunity to learn more about this topic from presenters, Shyam Mundra, Private Client Group, NorthStar Bank; and Suleman Makhani, Vice President of SBA Business Development, SunTrust Bank.



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## INDO-US CHAMBER DECEMBER FOCUS: RONAK GANATRA AND SONIA KALLARAKAL

With the upcoming transitions set to take place, the Executive Committee wanted members to have the opportunity to hear from the very people whose hard work and dedication make the Chamber a success.

### RONAK GANATRA, INDO-US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE E.C. MEMBER (DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND REVENUE MANAGEMENT, INSPIRE HOTELS)



**How long have you been involved with Indo-US?**  
I've been involved for almost 4 years.

**Why did you decide to join the Indo-US Executive Committee?**

I've always had a passion for business and entrepreneurship and wanted to connect myself with an organization that promoted commerce in our community. I also really enjoyed the different personalities on the Executive Committee.

**What are some of the highlights of your time on the Executive Committee?**

I've had the pleasure of working with some very smart and successful people. There is an incredible cadre of mentors within the organization, both in the Executive Committee as well as the Board of Directors. I've had the pleasure of meeting and getting to know Suneet Singh Tuli, the creator of the world's cheapest tablet computer, when he keynoted for our Banyan Ball this year. In previous years, I personally met the Consul General of India, and several other notable speakers. I've also enjoyed running the finances of the organization as treasurer, and most recently, helping to oversee the Banyan Ball while serving as Vice President. Overall, I've experienced a great diversity of learning in a very short period of time.

**Why would you encourage other to join the Executive Committee?**

First and foremost, it is an excellent opportunity to network. Coming to Chamber events every once in a while is great, but when you get involved, that's when the magic truly happens. It's also great opportunity to learn, no matter what stage you are in your career. The Chamber is a very flat organization, so anyone who is willing to commit and work has an opportunity to take a leading role, which is another reason the Chamber is so great. Everyone within the Executive Committee is working towards a common goal versus looking for personal enrichment.

**How would you like to see the Chamber grow?**

I believe entrepreneurship is a very important part of our economy, and I'd love to see more events and gatherings that help channel the resources already present in the community.

### SONIA KALLARAKAL, INDO-US CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SECRETARY (STUDENT, UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA)



**How long have you been involved with the Chamber?**  
I just completed a year on the Executive Committee and am gearing up for more!

**What drew you to the organization and why did you decide to become more involved?**

My first exposure to the Chamber was when I joined the planning team of the India International Film Festival, as the Chamber presents the film festival. I was then graciously invited to volunteer at the 2011 Banyan Ball at A La Carte, and I was just so impressed with how well established, professional and resourceful the Chamber was for business professionals in the Tampa Bay area. I knew that as an International Business major, a relationship with the Chamber

would be incredibly beneficial for me. I first became a member, and shortly thereafter, I was asked by the President at the time, Suleman Makhani, if I was interested in joining the Executive Committee as Secretary. The decision to say yes was easy.

**How have you benefitted from this experience?**

As a student, the Chamber has definitely put me in the limelight for my college career. It has opened so many new doors and experiences for me. Internships and jobs that I have applied for are impressed with the experience I have gained from my association with the Chamber. In fact, jobs have even been offered to me just because of my involvement as the Secretary of the Chamber. I am incredibly grateful to the Chamber for opening up a whole different side of Tampa Bay to me, especially as a youth. I have become more aware of how my city works in the business circuit, and I have learned a great deal about the economic impact this city has on the U.S. as a whole.

The Chamber has also educated me on how the infrastructure works here and has helped me create great relationships through networking opportunities – which is basically a wrapped gift for a college student! I couldn't have asked for anything more. The Chamber is a really great platform for any professional, especially those looking to market themselves and forge new relationships within their communities. I am always telling other college students to join the Chamber or attend an event, and I have even told students from out of town to get involved with their respective local Chamber because of my positive experiences.

**What do you feel you have been able to give back?**

I mostly help with the media and marketing side of the Chamber, so with my work added to the rest of the team's, I am proud that we have proved to be beneficial for our members. In my time with the Chamber, I have seen strong professional relationships form, new opportunities taken advantage of, businesses profit through Chamber affiliation, and members enjoy the education and awareness that we bring to our monthly networking meetings and events. To know that I was a part of that success and that I was able to provide something so gainful to our community is humbling to me. I am lucky to work with such a hospitable, hard working and visionary group of individuals who are on the Board and Executive Committee. We are all volunteers and every single person involved is passionate and dedicated to the work that we do for the Chamber.

**What advice would you give someone looking to get involved with the Chamber?**

Become a member and then be persistent in your relationship with the Chamber and you will benefit greatly. I have not heard of one disappointment yet and strive to keep it that way!

## THREE TOP BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING FOR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

By Angela Loeb

There are many benefits you'll get by volunteering for professional organizations or associations whether you are retired, in a career transition, an outright job search or just trying to advance yourself within your current employment situation. Here are three top benefits:

### 1 You'll Gain Connections:

Your aim might be to get a new job or it might be to get new friends. Regardless, you'll meet new people as well as possibly reinforce existing relationships through volunteering. I've made some enduring friendships working side-by-side with other volunteers. I would also go so far as to say that these connections now make up part of my social network and act as my "virtual" team in my work and life.

### 2 You'll Gain Skills:

I once heard great advice from a wise fellow volunteer. She said that you should always sign up for tasks or take on responsibilities that do not fall under your usual career area. In other words, if you're an accountant, don't get into the finance committee – instead, volunteer for the publicity or fundraising committees so you're a) not doing in your spare time as a volunteer what you do all day long as a paid professional and b) learn something new (and) expand your horizons.

### 3 You'll Gain Opportunities:

By getting involved in a professional or trade association, you increase your chances to hear about possible projects and job opportunities in the market. You can keep abreast of news, trends or technology updates in your field and in the business community at-large. These opportunities don't always come in expected ways, so keep your mind and ears open. My last two employers before I went solo gave me great jobs – I met them both through networking at professional organizations.

Source: Loeb, Angela. "Three Top Benefits of Volunteering for Professional Associations." Great Occupations. <http://www.greatoccupations.com/archives/383>

## Upcoming Indo-US Chamber Events:

### Quarterly Mixer and Networking Event

**Date:** Wednesday November 28, 2012

**Time:** 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM

**Location:** Taverna Opa • Channelside Bay Plaza (615 Channelside Drive, Tampa, FL 33602)

*This is a FREE event. No RSVP required.*

*There will be no monthly business and networking meeting in December, but Chamber meetings will resume in January.*

### Interested in Joining the Indo-US Chamber Executive Committee?

We will soon be accepting applications to become a part of the Indo-US Chamber's Executive Committee. This is a volunteer position. Visit [www.indo-us.org](http://www.indo-us.org) for more information.