

SABA – SC Holds 5th Annual Banquet at Union Station

BY K.B. NAIR

LOS ANGELES, CA – In the old world charm of the converted ticketing hall of the Union Station here, the South Asian Bar Association of Southern California (SABA – SC) held its 5th Annual Banquet on April 24. The event, which is the non-profit organization's primary fundraising event drew participant of around 250. The function presented an excellent opportunity to network with prominent members of the legal and business communities from Southern California.

Following the cocktail hour the evening's business session began with a welcome by the Foundation President Sayema Hameed when she emphasized the need for crucial assistance required by the South Asian community with its special linguistic and cultural background. She expressed happi-

ness at the outstanding growth of the organization, the doubling of its membership and funds raised, acknowledged sponsors one by one, thanked volunteers and members and congratulated the two honorees for the evening. This was followed by the introduction of distinguished individuals present at the event by the Vice President Tahim.

The keynote speaker of the evening was District Attorney of the City and County of San Francisco, Kamala Harris who was re-elected in 2007 after winning more than 98 percent of the votes. In her opening remarks she explained she was deeply influenced early in her childhood by her parents, extended family and members of her community who were all passionate about civil rights and were shouting for justice. The success of the civil rights movement were the lawyers who fig-



The gathering watches the proceedings.



Trailblazer Award Winner Javade Chaudhri, Foundation President Sayema Hameed, Presenter Aaruni Thakur and Public Service Award Winner Nitasha Sawhney

ured out the connection and the need to cure or solve a great injustice to many, contrary to the founding manifesto of the country which promises equality to all. For that reason her heroes were lawyers which made her determined to follow their footsteps.

Harris stated that it was the responsibility of the Criminal Justice System to protect the most vulnerable in our communities – the voiceless, children, women, seniors, the poor, hate crime victims etc. The system is also expected to protect and preserve the basic civil rights of all to be able to live in a safe community and without fear. While dealing with the issue she said the question to ask is not whether the system should be soft or tough on crime but its on crime. Viewing the problem from within the system she added it should concern itself not only with prosecuting crime after it occurs but before it occurs.

An astonishing 70% of 120,000 prisoners released annually return on repeat crimes within 3 years. She revealed that in her jurisdiction, with the cooperation of the private sector, law enforcement professionals etc. which helped to retrain, employ and counsel first time, low level offenders in the age group 18-24 the return was reduced from 53% to less than 10. She said it was important for organizations like SABA to disseminate information to victims of crimes against immigrants and victims of human trafficking that the criminal justice system cares about them and desires to protect them and their rights.

In closing she said it is exciting when the legal community can band together and identify the most vulnerable and like the heroes of the civil rights movement use the power of the law and that of being lawyers to influence the direction of the country to make true the promise of the land of equality and fairness to all.

President-Elect Paul Saghera in his speech to outlined the purpose and objectives of SABA and introduced the audience to the Foundation's Board.

During the course of the evening the past year's grantees, who had benefited from the funds released by the Foundation for their causes, briefed listeners on how they were utilized and the extent to which they had been able to help the beneficiaries. Suma Mathai spoke on behalf of the Los Angeles Center for Law and Justice, while Shakeel Syed addressed the audience on the work of the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California and Jyoti Chand on the efforts of the South Asian Network to upload the rights of members of the community and combat discrimination.

Two awards were presented by SABA. The Trailblazer Award went to Javade Chaudri, executive Vice President and general counsel for San Diego based Sempra Energy. Nitasha Sawhney was the recipient of the Public Service Award. Both Awardees spoke of their experiences, thanked SABA for the recognition and commended the organization for its yeoman service to the less fortunate in the community.

Entertainment was provided by the young Acapella group 'Naya Zamana' who presented an interesting medley mixture of Bollywood, western and carnatic pieces.

Knabe Fundraiser Nets \$75,000

BY IRENE GUPTA

TORRANCE, CA – Mayor Frank Hill of Rolling Hills, Councilor Gene Barnett of Torrance, Clint Creado, of Wachovia Bank, Fred Wright, President-Elect of Los Angeles Board of Realtors were amongst those who responded to a fundraiser for re-electing Don Knabe as Los Angeles County Supervisor for the 4th district. Arun Bhumitra at his office at the Arjay Plaza here was the host of the event.

Knabe himself did not attend on account of his father's death. Even though the event was 'canceled' it raised nearly \$75,000.

Bhumitra has been hosting a fundraiser every four years at the request of the Supervisor, since 1996. He believes Knabe means

good governance. "We need good governance, and more so now with all the budget crisis, jobs and the traffic. Knabe believe is partnership between the private and the public sector. His approach is more consultative, more deliberate and more amenable to transparency," says Bhumitra.

"There are many issues in the country that touches all parts of our daily life. Beaches and Harbor, Parks and recreation or the Health services. There are 39 major Departments plus share services, which is a combination of 19 small departments Both the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports, and also the Los Angeles Airport, come under his jurisdiction the 4th district. We need someone who is adept at handling these specifically when there is a budget crisis," explains Bhumitra.



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