

IWA Executive Committee Report for the year 2013

COMMUNITY SERVICE

1. GOONJ DONATION DRIVE

The year began with IWA organizing the Goonj Donation Drive in April 2013. With an enhanced team of volunteers and expanded drop off locations, the drive was IWA's most successful one yet. People donated enthusiastically and we managed to collect almost 2000 kg worth of clothes, toys, books and other essential items to be distributed India wide to the most needy. Thirty volunteers contributed their invaluable time and energy towards the cause. Prior to the drive the IWA team organized a volunteer briefing session. We thank veteran Goonj volunteer Ramya Nageshwar who helmed the show and all those who opened their homes for donation drop off.

2. COLLABORATION with SINDA

IWA had also met with SINDA for collaboration and volunteering opportunities. Piu Lahiri(President), Mohini Kumar and Ms. Mehak Krishnaman met with Mr. S. Devendran (Head of Volunteer Engagement and Community Development) and his team on 14th March 2013. Mr. Devendran shed light on the various programmes in SINDA like its mentoring programmes, tuition programmes and the "learning with fun" programmes. The IWA Team also attended the talk on the Athena Project for single mothers and teenaged pregnancies. The counseling techniques and the process adopted by SINDA were highlighted.

In October, IWA volunteers assisted SINDA staff to make a life size Rangoli at the Arts and Science Museum. There was a huge volunteer turn out at this event.

SINDA requested IWA volunteers to be part of their Diwali Bazaar, assisting SINDA staff with Project Give. It was a good opportunity for IWA volunteers to spread awareness about SINDA and encourage people to donate generously to Project Give which raises funds for the education of underprivileged children in India.

3. ORISSA FUNDRAISER: Meeting with Anshu Gupta

In November 2013. Mr Anshu Gupta from Goonj addressed both IWA and non-IWA participants, highlighting the extent of the Orissa flood disaster and the relief work that Goonj has been doing in the flood hit areas. He told us that financial help would be more beneficial rather than donations in kind. Later a presentation was made before the Executive Committee highlighting the extent of disaster and seeking ideas as to how funds could be raised for the same. One of the ideas that came up was to raise money individually through e-pledges by publicizing the cause on the IWA Facebook page. Other ideas were through organizing events like exhibitions and a walk- a- thon or a run. However the process also involves acquiring a fundraising permit from the Commissioner of Charity and the fundraiser event needs to be organized within six months of the disaster. Information has been gathered to apply for the fundraising permit.

4. COLLABORATION WITH BEYOND SOCIAL SERVICES (BSS)

The IWA Community Services Team met with Ms Cheryl Lek (Community Engagement and Volunteer Management Head) to seek volunteering opportunities for IWA members and non-members alike. BSS is an NGO working with children to reduce juvenile delinquency amongst children and youth through familial and community support. Extracurricular activities such as organizing music and dance workshops, art and craft sessions, along with games and storytelling sessions were highlighted. A Volunteer orientation for all IWA members was organized recently at the BSS office in January 2014. Eight members from the IWA team attended the volunteer orientation event. On the 27th January 2014 IWA team participated in a sharing session at Whampoa Drive along with an observation session with children. The sharing was fruitful as it highlighted the various possible activities that could be done with children like art and craft, games, reading and storytelling. It was decided that IWA members and non-members would conduct an interactive session with children from Waterfall Student Care at Redhill MRT to celebrate Valentine's Day on 1st February 2014. Ms. Raja, the BSS teacher in charge conducted the sharing.

5. DONATION TO FAMILY OF MIGRANT WORKER J GUNASEKARAN (IWA initiated)

In October, Piu Lahiri and Tara Dhar initiated a spontaneous collection drive for an Indian migrant worker who was killed in a work related accident. IWA members gave generously but soon the community at large got involved and we as a community, including many non-IWA members were able to remit SGD 2000 to his widow with the help of our new Deputy High Commissioner.

6. SWAMI HOME COLLABORATION

Continuing our beautiful relationship with the SWAMI Home residents, IWA's CARE team headed by Mohini Kumar, Piu Lahiri and Manjula Bains, organized four events at the SWAMI Home this year.

We raised most of our stipulated budget of \$1200 per event through kind donations & sponsorships from our members. All four events were well attended by members and their families. Continuing a well-loved tradition, we celebrated birthdays of the residents at each event, and played a host of interactive games with them and then handed out useful gifts to all the residents. Each event also included special performances to complement the theme of the day.

In the spring, our **Vaisakhi** event was warmed by lively Indian music from the IWA Music Club led by Ms Raji Vishwanathan. This was followed by an impromptu dance performance by IWA volunteers that got many residents and their caregivers tapping their feet and even joining in.

The Autumn Visit- **Gokul Ashtami** event introduced Lord Krishna to the residents of Swami Home. Ms Sugandha Aggarwal donated a unique Blue 'Krishna Cake'. The highlight of the event was a professional Odissi dance recital by the famous dance troupe Chitrakala Arts, led by Chitra Shankar.

The winter Visit-**Christmas** season doubled in joy and celebration. The Well-known artiste Ms Noella Menon joined in with her family to lead the Carol singing. Capt Gurwinder Singh Bains brought many smiles with his jolly Santa Claus act, wishing and distributing gifts. IWA member, Sukanya Pushkarna made the event more meaningful by reading out the 'The Fuzzy Christmas Story' in Mandarin & English. It was indeed a Merry Christmas!

The Festival of Colours- Holi, ushered in the Spring of 2014. The highlight of this gathering was a scintillating and colorful dandiya performance by the Sampada dance group. IWA music club members also sang a Hindi song. A 'Heartfelt thanks' to all who donated their time and money so generously this year to make these events successful.

VIDYA SCHOLARSHIP

Heng Hong Na, the current recipient of the IWA Vidya Scholarship, at first sight, seems like any quiet second-year undergraduate pursuing a degree in Accountancy at Singapore Management University.

But don't let her shy demeanor fool you – it is the velvet glove that hides a core of steel. Her grit and resilience in the face of her family's financial troubles is awe-inspiring. Her father runs a small business and is the sole breadwinner of the family and the financial commitment of a tertiary education took a large sum out of the family's savings. "I am aware that education is a privilege," she says candidly, "and not many women around the world can take this for granted. I have to make the best out of this opportunity." We, at IWA, are proud of this young woman who has beaten many odds to reach this place in her life. Financial difficulties almost cut short her journey, and we are glad that the IWA was able to lend a helping hand.

"Learning never stops," she continues, "I would like to continue my career in the field of accounting and work towards the goal of being a Chartered Accountant after graduation." We wish you all the best, Hong Na, and hope that your steadfastness of purpose will be a shining light for many other young women to follow.

IWA BAZAAR – The best bazaar in town!

The Indian Women's Association (IWA) of Singapore is a non-profit organization that functions as a Voluntary Welfare Organization (VWO) through its elected committee and volunteer member base.

IWA endeavors to bring the Indian community together by giving them a platform to connect, support, and network with each other whilst living Singapore. IWA's mission is not only to present a cultural platform, but also to provide a networking interface to its working members. One such event that IWA organizes each year is the IWA bazaar, wherein we create an opportunity for homegrown business to thrive.

In an effort to encourage women to build their businesses, the IWA Bazaar provides an opportunity for these women to showcase their talent. A special committee has been created to overlook the working of the bazaar, and curate and bring the crème-de-'a-crème in fashion, apparel and accessories for its shoppers.

With growing popularity, IWA now does 2 bazaars each year, popularly known as the IWA Summer bazaar and the IWA Diwali bazaar respectively. What started off small, where a handful of vendors were brought under one roof to organize a mini bazaar, it has today become one of the most awaited bazaars within the Indian community in Singapore. With over 100 vendors showcasing under one roof and 3000 footfall, the bazaar is a premier event offering the best of Indian products to Singapore and needless to say, creates a high buzz in the community. The IWA bazaar definitely features in every shopper's calendar.

Hosted at five star venues, this one-day shopping extravaganza is definitely not to be missed. With vendors flying in from India, Indonesia, Thailand, USA and Dubai the IWA bazaar has literally succeeded in bringing the world at your feet.

All funds raised from this event support IWA Supported Charities and I CARE Community Service Chapters: SWAMI Old Age Home, Singapore Higher Education Fund, Foreign Migrant Workers Cuff Road Project Assistance & other I CARE projects.

Bazaar Dates for 2014: 9th May and 26th September

MEMBERSHIP

1. IWA Holi Meet 2013@ Myra's Beach Club on 24th March was indeed a colorful and vibrant show. It was a celebration with members, nonmembers and friends. The venue provided all the flexibility to play with colors, take a dip in the beach and yet not be constrained. People danced with gay abandon to foot tapping beats of the DJ while some did a merry jig to the sounds of the Dhol. The colorful event was covered by the media and telecast on Sony and Vasantham TV channels. The food was a delight to the palate and relished by all.

The success of the event was the result of hard work put in by the team@ memberships under the able guidance of IWA president Piu Lahiri. We would like to say a special thanks to our tech guru, Nalini Thitte for her support. We are now ready for another Holi event in just a few days! **HOLI on the Beach @ Myra's Beach Club on the 22nd of March 2014**

2. Rendezvous was another event conducted by our team to welcome and interact with new members. It was a thoroughly engaging afternoon for the old and new members alike. Fun games and interesting anecdotes served as ice breakers and set the tempo thus ensuring a thorough intermingling of all members.

Moving forward we want to woo the local Singaporean Indians and bring them into the IWA fold thereby enriching the tapestry and outreach of IWA.

Looking Ahead: Integration Carnival- where we will showcase food and clothing from all parts of India and also bring in Singapore's Chinese and Indian heritages as well. Date-TBA

CLUBS:

KIDZVENTURE CLUB

Chair-Gauri Savadi, Monali Rudra

A dedicated group of volunteers at IWA helping children of registered members and beyond to achieve PRAISE: Perseverance, Reflection, Appreciation, Inventiveness, Sense of wonder and curiosity, Engagement.

These learning dispositions were achieved in the year 2013-14 by organizing events, outings, workshops for children from the ages of 2 years old to 16 years and by providing them a platform for achieving greater heights through these diverse learning experiences.

1. **Doctor for a day:** an exciting educational journey that allowed kids to play dress up and role play as doctors in settings like the Operating Theatre and Emergency Room.

2. **Zumbatomic**-Get the FLOW! Conducted by Namrta Birmi

3. Get into the green scene-"**Our trash is our Treasure**"

5 to 12 year olds joined us for a recycling workshop - to learn ways to make a difference in the lives of our learners, to propel them into the world as beacons of recycle & reuse.

GOURMET GODDESS CLUB

Vidhya Nair- Chairperson

Kavita Daga – Committee Member

Neelam Lara – Committee Member

Beena Joseph – Committee Member

Club Highlights

GGC was a newly formed club for IWA in 2013-14. The club is aimed at food enthusiasts interested in gourmet discourse, discovering new ingredients, methods, develop healthy eating habits and ideas and appreciate the finer points of dining.

GGC organised 7 events in 2013-14. On average, 25 members participated in each event. The format for each event included a demonstration, interactive discussion, knowledge games and sampling.

April – Healthy Breads @ Home: We learned simple bread making, healthy ingredient buying & ideas for salads, soups & bread desserts.

May – Mango – A Summer's Delight: A highly interactive session that covered drinks, appetizers, mains & desserts celebrating mangoes

July – Sample a Raw Food Experience: Members visited The Living Café & were taught the concept of raw food (and cooking ingredients at low temperatures) to preserve maximum nutritional content.

September – Unwrapped: a hands-on interactive session on select Peranakan dishes like ondeh-ondeh, kuih dadah, Nonya popiah & Otah. Through the demonstration, members learned about local flavours and ingredients.

November – A Parisian Rendezvous: Members visited Balzac Brasserie, a French bistro specialising in regional French cuisine. Lunch was followed by a Q&A with the chef on French cooking, culture and seasonal ingredients.

February – Building an Enriched Palate: Members were taught how to grow vegetables & herbs in their home. March – Wine Appreciation Class (Upcoming): Members will be introduced to different regional influences and styles of both red and white wine. We have planned for it to be a relaxing evening event.

IWA MUSIC CLUB

Chair- Raji Viswanathan

The IWA music club has always had a very enthusiastic group of ladies, some who are singers and others who are music appreciators. This year too we have a wonderful group of music lovers. The music club meets every third Thursday of the month at one our member's homes, each time we have a theme and sometimes a dress code too. Our theme, decided by the host has been varied...

"Songs written by Gulzar or Javed Akhter" "Semi classical Songs of Hindi Cinema", "Regional Songs", "Songs of Yesudas", "Songs on Dosti"/ "Dard Bhare Geet", "Songs composed by RD Burman", " My Favourite Song". In the month of August we had a session of Patriotic songs on the 15th August where some of our other IWA members outside music club joined in and we all shared our nostalgia while singing "deshbhakti ke Geet", some of them bringing tears to our eyes. That session, fittingly our dress code was tri colors of Indian flag.

To finish our financial year 2013-14 with a blast, we had our Annual ticketed Music Event on the theme “*Tab Se Ab Tak—A Journey of Music Through Time*” which was attended by members and non- members alike. It was an open mike night with live Music performances by all who came forward to sing. We also had games, DJ, more Music over dinner and finally the floor opened to all those who wished to dance.

ADDA CLUB

Chair-Rashmi Gogna

ADDA-Food for thought is a discussion group that meets once a month for an in-depth conversation on a wide range of topics. The club was started as an effort to bring together intelligent women for discussions they did not get enough of anywhere else. All our meetings are held in the homes of our members, which is conducive to good group communication.

Topics we discussed this year:

Feminism- Its relevance Today

Marriage-The only accepted norm?

Dreams-They mean something. Or do they?

Superstitions- Blind dogma or concealed wisdom?

What Women Want

Is “Equality of genders” in itself detrimental to women’s empowerment?

FITNESS CLUB

Chair-Nirupa Vasudev, Padmaja Balaji

A new club for this year, we hoped to attract members by organizing 6 different events pertaining to health and fitness. All events were well attended and members showed a great deal of enthusiasm. They were free demonstration, informative and interactive sessions. Each generated administrative revenue from the event conductors and had minimal expenditure.

Apart from this the fitness club also participated in a yogathon where its members undertook and successfully completed 101 surya namaskars.

We hope to continue bringing programmes, which will raise awareness regarding health and fitness among our members and their families.

- 1) Dancercise
- 2) Efficacy of Homeopathy
- 3) Taekwondo
- 4) Insights on Meditation
- 5) Reiki Workshop
- 6) Reverse Your Age

SCRABBLE CLUB

Chair-Mohini Kumar, Seema Chatterjee

Scramble to Scrabble - That’s what the IWA members did and formed the Scrabble club. The enthusiasm displayed by the members was unprecedented and the scrabble club very soon had the hardcore scrabblers and those that needed initiation.

Members hosted the meetings monthly at their homes on the second Thursday of every month.

Very soon the rules, the acceptable dictionary etc were finalised and the club got down to the business of playing the game. strategies were chalked out, challenges thrown and accepted and with every passing meeting, the players were getting better and better. The wannabes' were soon competing with the champs and giving them a run for their money. Most importantly, everyone was enjoying the scrabble outings thoroughly.

Unfortunately, the year came to an end very soon and we are left with longing for more. We expect to pick up the pace next year. I won't be surprised if the popularity of this club ends up forcing us to meet twice every month in the coming year.

BOOK CLUB

Chair- Sukanya Pushkarna

This Year, the club met 9 times and also organized 4 book events.

Members of our club read books of varying genres and engaged in thought provoking, invigorating, sometimes emotional, but always inspiring discussions in every session with all attending members weighing in. We also tried to keep our reading in step with our book events for the year and read Josephine Chia's *Kampong Spirit* for her June appearance and a variety of Singapore based authors for our upcoming March mega event. Our best sessions were those in which we read "life experience" or philosophical books. This year it was *the five people you meet in heaven* by Mitch Albom.

Most hotly debated were Sheryl Sandberg's *Lean In* and Amish Tripathi's *Meluha*. Other books we read: *Sea of poppies* by Amitav Ghosh, *The Sense of an Ending* by Julian Barnes, *Sing me home* by Jodie Picoult, *Across Many Mountains* by Yangzom Brauen, and Somnath Dhar's *From Partition to Operation Blue Star: Tales of a journalist, bureaucrat, spy*

BOOK CLUB EVENTS

Chair-Tara Dhar Hasnain

Our kick-off event for the year was a twofer in June. Drs. Julie and Harish Mehta, the co-authors of the only authorised biography of Hun Sen, entitled *Strongman: The Extraordinary Life of Hun Sen*, spoke to us about their book based on years of interviews with Hun Sen and his family. The event also gave IWA members a chance to hear Julie Mehta talk about her experiences as the founding president of our own organization! Dr. Gauri Krishnan and author Meira Chand, who were members of her committee also shared deep insight on their experiences of those years.

In September, Josephine Chia, a Singaporean author, (*Frog Under the Coconut Shell*), spoke to us about her recently published book, *Kampong Spirit: Gotong Royong* (edited by IWA member and Book Event Chair, Tara Hasnain.) The audience really enjoyed Josephine's dramatic story telling and the event was a super success. This event also fitted in very well with IWA's theme of 'integrate and connect.' The last event of 2013 was an informal session with author Sunil Nair. Although the gathering was arranged at short notice, the turn out was very good. Sunil read excerpts from his first novel and also a long piece from his humor-filled forthcoming work, which had members laughing out loud.

Last but not least, we have a multi-author event planned for the 15th of March 2014. Some of Singapore's best-known writers of different genres will be speaking in different panels including one on poetry and one on women. The idea is to get our community to interact with famous authors who live among us and through them, to learn a bit more about Singapore from new angles. The event is free and open to the public. We hope to see you there.

ENTREPRENEUR'S CLUB

Chair-Vandana Talwar

The IWA Entrepreneurs Club is a group for dynamic, creative, educated, and forward-thinking vibrant women to share their ideas, career stories, and goals as they embark on non-traditional careers. The group is a forum for women to post ideas, events, and collaborate on projects. During our quarterly meetings, we will have speakers lead discussions on various topics, such as taking the plunge into entrepreneurship, financial planning, balancing work and family, and practical tips for solo practitioners/ owners. We also provide the opportunity to network with each other and learn about businesses.

We organized 3 events this year:

1. Business Coaching Seminar-"If you stop working, can your business continue?"-Mr. Jeffery Quek
2. What to expect when you do business-Guest lecture by Veronica Ong
3. Learning's from an entrepreneur's journey-Lecture and interactive session by Vinti