

Partnerships for change – for Sydney’s South Asian community

May 2011, Parramatta

Since the launch of NSW Seniors Week, older people have gained some visibility in a range of ethnic community media. We celebrated the participation and roles of older people and possibly gained some insight into the challenging role of community development workers and volunteers who are active behind the scenes to connect and support older people.

We need multiple approaches to connecting older people with others particularly if they are isolated by distance, lack of English language proficiency, economic security, housing, health or just finding their way in a new environment whether on bridging, temporary or permanent visas. We applaud the range of initiatives by community workers and ethnic organisations taking place in various parts of Sydney metro. The range of programs on offer assist older people to find a culturally-appropriate response to their need - be it social, cultural or religious.

Alternatively, older people or their family/friends can contact their local council about Home and Community Care services which offers a suite of basic services to support older people to remain at home.

One less visible group in the South Asian community are carers of a young or older person with a disability. How do we react to disability as a community of South Asians?

SEVA International (www.sevainternational.org), an acronym for Social Entrepreneurial Ventures of Australian South Asians, is a unique South Asian organisation that is actively involved in the social and welfare issues that affect the lives of people from a South Asian background. Rather than work from a membership base, SEVA believes in commitment to equal partnership through sharing of skills, knowledge and experience in order to bring about social change. SEVA volunteers identify issues and work with a range of committed people to bring about change. At a social level, three projects illustrate this partnership.

- **Ready, steady, cook --- the South Asian Way**- an event which was organised during the 2011 Seniors Week celebrated the many ways older people 'live life'. Some got on public transport to travel out of area, a group of seniors who are on a visit from India just wanted to enhance their visit experience and some local seniors just wanted to pop round to see what was happening. The group of seniors entertained their 'cooks' with verse and song while lunch was a tough competition between two young cooks, and students from Granville TAFE came on board as volunteers.
- **Transport ... key to moving** is a project in Parramatta local government area (LGA) that assists people to use public transport through 4 learning sessions. The journeys can be within the LGA or

start/end in Parramatta LGA. The training is **free** to seniors (60 years and over) and open to all South Asian seniors particularly those on long-stay and bridging visas who need higher levels of support. Seniors can be assisted individually or as a group. Participants will be required to attend an information session in Harris Park (or Parramatta) so that we can share information about the project's purpose and outcomes. For more information, contact Caroline at sydromeo@tpg.com.au or 0402 596 813.

- **Connecting South Asian carers** is also a project in Parramatta LGA that aims to create a South Asian support group for people who care for a young or older person with a disability. We are hosting an event on Sat, 28th May at Parramatta Town Hall to which we invite carers and their families to come together to hear the 'voices' of carers as they share their journeys, participate in some fun activities and then take part in a workshop to identify some key issues to address in future as a group. Disability support workers will be available during the day as is transport assistance, if required.

- ✓ Want to connect with other carers and share experiences?
Come to this free event
- ✓ Want to raise awareness of disability and improve access for carers and their family? Come and take part in the workshop
- ✓ Curious about the nature of disability? Come and participate to make a difference

Contact – Caroline on 0402 596 813 or sydromeo@tpg.com.au

OR

Contact Rajni on 0432 798 938 or raorajeshwari@ymail.com by 21 May 2011

Partnerships in our South Asian community can bring about change for others as well ---- if you know anyone who will benefit from the two projects, share this information with them.