

2. NASA 2014 Annual Meeting Report – A look back

Celebrating 30 Years of Culture, Community and Charity July 4-6, Vanderkamp Retreat Center

The NASA 30th Anniversary event was held at the Vanderkamp Retreat Center in Cleveland, NY. The venue has many opportunities for outdoor fun including hiking, boating and swimming.

The NASA 30th anniversary began on Friday afternoon with cultural programs following a delicious lunch. This year's event started off with Kolaata, although initially hesitant, once the Kannada folk music started, our Sankethi friends became very involved! Karaoke brought on enthusiastic singing of Kannada, Hindi and English songs. This year teams "Kolkatte," "Ambode" and "Chomai" competed in Sankethi Jeopardy with questions on Sankethi history, food, geography, notable personalities and NASA. Congrats to - "Team Ambode" consisting of Bharat Kumar, Aditi Kumar, and Suresh Keshavsmurthy. The evening concluded with a talk by Dr. Jayaram on rare stories of the Mahabharata & Ramayana including many funny anecdotes and other tales -- An excellent end to the first day of the NASA 30th anniversary.

A nature walk led by Mr. K. Sundaresan started off Sat Jul 5th at 7am! About twenty people participated ambling through the beautiful nature trails at Vanderkamp. It was a gorgeous, sunny day and upon completion; all were greeted with a feast comprised of Idli, Vada and Sambaar.

The annual general body meeting (GBM) was held after breakfast. Details are in the minutes. Following lunch began the NASA Scavenger Hunt. Over 40 people participated across 6 teams to "FIND" things - like the oldest NASA guest, "DO" things - like climb a tree, and, "MAKE" things - like draw each member of the team. Along the way, teams were asked to photograph themselves. After scoring the champions were Sunil Rao, Srikanth Rao, Dale Poage, Sanjay, and Mayank Keshaviah. Then, all members relaxed and enjoyed the Talent show. Members of all ages entertained us with singing, folk dancing, Bharatnatyam, and instrumental pieces.

The next event was a talk by Pandit Anand Shastri. A fellow Sankethi, Pt. Shastri is a Gita pracharak and has been spreading the divine message of the Gita for four decades. Pt. Shastri's emphasis is on the practical aspect of Gita knowledge in present day life. His lecture focused on three dimensions of human personality- thoughts, actions and behavior. Thoughts are the guiding force behind all our activities and behavior. Negative or perverted thoughts stimulate destructive activity and inhuman, rude behavior, resulting in tension, estrangement of relationships, financial problems and sorrow. His talk was practical, enlightening and enjoyed by all, young and old alike.

The NASA Skit was back after a 10 year hiatus! Mayank Keshaviah and Ashwini Srikantiah wrote the idea, and Mayank directed the world premiere of "S-Men: the Battle Against the Agents of WASP". In the traditional NASA style, this improvised skit was a spoof on "X-Men" super heroes, where each "S-Man" had a mutant Sankethi power. "Buddhi, the 100 Degree Man" - played by Vikas Natesh, has more degrees than anyone can count: MS, MBA, PhD, MD, MPH, etc. "Ispit", played by Sachin Natesh, could out-play anyone in cards. Tara Rudrapatna as "Natya," used dance to chop down her opponents. Sunil Rao as "Sangeet", had a melodious voice that could lull anyone to sleep. "Oota", played by Ashwini Srikantiah, had Chomai Power ensnaring opponents in her chomai webs. The S-Men were called when "Auntie", played by Ranjini Srikantiah, was kidnapped from the kitchen of a NASA meeting! She was taken by the Agents of WASP - White American Sankethi Partners – in an attempt to steal Sankethi recipes. The Agents of WASP were Louise Keshaviah, Dale Poage and Dima Khavulya, assisted by the rogue double-agent, Shalini Rao. After a long chase and an epic fight sequence, the Agents of WASP finally fell prey to Auntie's "hottay bomb" (stomach bomb) – stemming from the extra-deadly

chilies in her bisi bele bhath! Afterwards, the Agents of WASP and the S-Men realized that they could all collaborate, with the proceeds of their restaurant going to NASA!

On Saturday evening, NASA was proud to introduce Traditional Sankethi Dining – Bale Yele Oota. This was a huge success and brought back memories of feasting in Karnataka. A traditional Sankethi mouth-watering meal was served on “Bale Yele”, with Rangoli. Menu included Uppinakayi, Kosambari, Paalya Ambode, Majjige huli, pineapple Gojju, Chitranna and 2 sweets (Hayagreeva and Jahangeer). The meal finished with Vetthale Pak (Betel leaf) – Yum!

After dinner, we were privileged to have a performance by our main artist, Mrs. Soudamini Venkatesh. Soudamini is an extremely talented and creative musician, composer, singer, songwriter, recognized for her technical skills and in depth understanding of Hindustani music. Soudamini has developed an innovative style that interweaves various Gharanas (schools of music) without losing the innate qualities of any one of them. She enchanted us with her sonorous mellifluous voice singing pure classical pieces, tumris, folk songs, abhangs and bhajans, Soudamini has performed globally and is an All India Radio artist with numerous cassettes and CDs. The concert began with raag YAMAN VILAMBIT EK TAAL – PALKAN SE MAG JHAARU. Other memorable songs during the concert included Raag KANADA – DAYA MAADO RANGA DAYA MAADO and Raag DEN BHAIRAVI – SADA YENNA HRIDAYA DALLI.

The Bonfire was back this year as another highlight of the weekend. It was a great chance to enjoy the natural setting of Vanderkamp by sitting around a fire, and enjoying one another's company. Ashok Rudrapatna also provided beautiful paper lanterns that were cast off into the sky - A great way to end Saturday's programming.

Sunday morning began with the Veda parayana at 7 AM. Many dressed in traditional attire (panche, anga vestra, and vibhuti) joined by Pandit Anand Shastri chanted Shanti mantras, Rudram and Chamakam, and Durga Suktam. This session concluded with the full recitation of Vishnusahasranama stotra.

Following breakfast, the first "Sankethi Iron Chef" competition was held in which non-traditional ingredients like Olives, Artichokes and Mole Sauce were used to create the most traditional Sankethi dish possible. Judges Divakar Rudrapatna, Dr. Jayaram and Shalini Rudrapatna scored based on taste and how well they represented Sankethi cuisine. The winners of the competition were Ranjini Srikantiah, Shilaja Srikantiah and Prema Kumar who created delicious Mole Puliogare, Artichoke Palya and Olive Mosar-bhajji. YUMM!

Another event held during the get-together was, the 28 card game! As many of you know, 28 card game is a famous tradition among Sankethis. This year there were 8 players in the Tournament. The game was played for 90 minutes and the persons who had the maximum number of points were declared Champion and Runner up. This year Sri. Nagaraja Rao from Pittsburgh, PA was the champion and Dr Y.N. Jayaram was in the second place. We encourage all Sankethi bandhus who know the game to participate next year and those who do not know the game, they should learn and challenge this year's winners :)

2014 Annual Event in Pictures

