

West Coast Newsline

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Community supports Telugu prog at Berkeley

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BAY Area Telugu teacher Mruthyunjayudu Tatipamala was all smiles at the recent town hall meeting to initiate an endowed chair for Telugu Language Studies at the University of Berkeley. The town hall meeting was held last July 16 at the Milpitas Public library and attended by about 35 people.

In a testament to the large population of Telugu speaking people and their interest in keeping the culture language and customs of Andhra Pradesh alive, the meeting was attended by several interested people representing associations from across Northern California. Some like Vijaya Jonnalagadda, Kumar and Sandhya Kalagara and others drove from Sacramento about 150 miles away.

The Telugu Initiative at UC Berkeley is spearheaded by Professor Vemuri of University of California, Davis. Professor Vemuri briefly outlined the history and significance of this effort in context of increased interest in Telugu language including naming Telugu as a Classical Language, and also related incidents like the upcoming US Consulate in Hyderabad, the interest in Andhra Pradesh in general.



Vemuri informed that the classes will commence in Fall semester 2007, for which the community will collect at least \$200,000 by December 2006. A minimum commitment of \$1 million is required to launch the endowment program.

Restaurateur Jayram Komati suggested that raising \$200,000 would not be a problem and even raising \$1 million was foreseeable given the number of Telugu associations across the country. Experienced fundraiser Vijaya Asuri of the Bay Area Telugu Association (BATA), who has been instrumental in raising over \$100K for relief and humanitarian efforts suggested, "It is always good idea to start fund raising earlier the better rather than waiting till December."

Experienced observers, who have worked with language initia-

tives at universities, suggested that the goal should be above the minimum suggested amount of \$1 million required.

Shantivaradhan Ayyagari of Silicon Andhra group, suggested formation of a task force and consulting already established language programs at the University of Michigan and Emory University in Atlanta. Professor Raka Ray of University of Berkeley, Department of South Asian Studies could not attend the program, but agreed to help the efforts. Dr Ray was instrumental in setting up Bangla language studies at UC Berkeley which already has language instruction programs in Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit Punjabi and endowed chair in Tamil Language Studies.

Following the discussion portion, several people like Vasu Kudipudi from Sacramento pledged to get more involved like conducting benefit cultural events and look into matching donations programs via employer corporations. Attendees Kausal Vepa and Jagy Pattur of Pleasance suggested a multi-pronged strategy of approaching corporations including Microsoft Corporation. The meeting ended with about \$20,000 raised among attendees.

Physician Dr Gopal Nemana from Sacramento said: "I tried to teach Telugu to my kids when they were young. But they were adamant not to learn. Now they feel that they missed the boat. Let us see that this should not happen to other kids."

