

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Press Contact: Suresh Seshan; Ritu Marwah

FFE Phone: (408) 985-2001

Website: www.ffe.org

Email: saseshan@ffe.org

Contact for photographs of the event: Arturo Vera <verastudio@att.net>

Magical Fundraiser 2009

by Ritu Marwah



Milpitas, CA, November 15, 2009: Foundation for Excellence has invested in over 10,554 scholars since its inception in 1994. The mood of the evening was magical as if Saraswati, the goddess of Learning herself stepped onto the stage in the form of three dainty bharatnatyam dancers who tip toed into the hearts of the diners. The November 2009 fundraiser saw a groundswell of support as scholars and donors together raised one year's scholarship assistance for about 225 students, a net of \$110,000 in one evening.

The Foundation for Excellence gala at the Jain Temple in Milpitas transported 240 diners to the enchantment that is India. Delectable vegetarian food was served at the table in shining silver thalis by a bevy of black tied waiters. Fresh marigolds released their fragrance as lit divas winked suggestively through the evening. Donors dined with scholars they had helped fund. Dreams for professional fields of study like engineering and medicine would have remained dreams for the scholars on the paltry salary of parents if it was not for Foundation for Excellence who ferreted out deserving students from the multitude that is India. FFE hand picked excellent scholars from all states of India and helped them achieve their goals.

Srinath Anantharaju got a resounding ovation as he shared his story. "It was a breeze securing a state-wide 5th rank in the 12th class and getting a much desired admit from BITS-Pilani. But I had given up because I was not in a position to afford it with my father's salary of Rs. 3000 per month." He met FFE facilitator Mrs. Hema Deshpande who got him a scholarship to carry him through his engineering degree. "I then went onto work at INSEAD in France as a research associate. I did my Masters from North Carolina and am presently working in Google developing Mobile advertisement security for smartphones such as iPhone/Android. I have been with Google for about four and a half years now, out of which I worked out of Google's Brazil office for a year and a half. I will try my best to make you proud."

Comedienne Dhaya Lakshminarayanan opened the evening on a light hearted note. With her background from MIT and having growing up in a education driven family she was an instant hit with the audience as she narrated tales of her brother going for a "spelling wee."

Educating youth has an impact not only on the individual, but the family, the community and the country as a whole. Each child supported touches many people and families. Raj Shah presented the multiplier effect of every donation.

As the scholars lined up on stage Ritu Marwah urged donors to break the cycle of poverty through education. She introduced 4 FFE scholars who had been recipients of FFE scholarships and were now working in the bay area.

"Women are under so many restrictions, even at this day and age. The problem is in our thinking. Our thinking is built upon what we learn...education, our family, our society. We are so poor that our kids cannot be educated and thus they cannot learn anything new or different that what the society can teach them. It's a vicious cycle," said Rajee Nair who had benefited from FFE's generosity. "I was one among the lucky few who was funded by FFE in 1996 when my family was in need. At last year's gala at the Jain Temple I sponsored a student. When I read the letter written to me by the scholar I had funded I was so moved. I felt I was reliving the past....I was so proud of that child."

The money raised at the event will go to support FFE scholars in all states of India. FFE donors have an option to fund deserving students from their choice of state, area or region. The Gujarat, Uttarkhand and Rajasthan communities were present in large numbers.

FFE works hard to keep costs under control. The elegant evening was volunteer run. The ethnic table décor was brought from Los Angeles by Sangita Bhardwaj, Sangeeta Balram, Chitra Shah, Nilita Paul. Arturo Photography donated proceeds of the evenings photographs to FFE. Raj Shah, a senior executive from Google said he has chosen to devote his time, money and thought to FFE as repayment for the education he received from Indian universities at minimal cost. With cost ratio lower than 10% FFE wisely uses its funds to maximize return for its scholars. "Every penny saved pays a child's school fee," said Mr Seshan, the Executive Director at FFE's Santa Clara office.

FFE delivers change and last Sunday's enchanting gala did just that.

**Foundation For Excellence, 1850 Warburton Ave., #201
Santa Clara, CA 95050
Phone (408) 985 2001 • Fax (408) 985 1877
www.ffe.org**