

TASA SANKRANTHI REPORT

- Review by Venkatesh Adivi

The Telugu Association of San Antonio (TASA) began its 2011 cultural activities with a well-attended and well-organized Sankranti Sambaraalu at the Mahalakshmi Hall on Saturday, January 22nd, 2011. As the annual membership drive program, this event with local talent garnered considerable interest, attendance and participation with the hall filling to capacity. Murthy Patamalla, as the new President of TASA for 2011-12, marshaled his fresh team of Executive Committee Members, and delivered a complex, well-orchestrated program.

Mothers gladly participated in the Bhogipallu ceremony for their kids. This was followed in quick succession by pairs competing to render colorful Muggulu (top 3 teams awarded) and chefs preparing Chakra Pongali (tastiest top 3 won). A delicious Pandaga Bhojanam, sponsored by the Botlas, the Joolukuntlas, the Gundlapallis and Pavani Express, awaited the registered audience. Boorelu, fried mirapakayalu, vada, and appadam accompanied a sumptuous feast.

MCs, Sailaja Tamtam and Deepti Kona, ably and patiently shepherded a lively cultural program that included songs, dances, skits and felicitations. Door prizes, sponsored by Owl Cleaners, Mustafa Inc. and Asia Food Mart, were awarded intermittently throughout the program. To promote exposure and involvement, current life members were invited to the stage to present trophies, kindly sponsored by Ravi Botla, to every participant at the end of each item. A highlight of the evening's celebration was the Bone Marrow Registration Drive that elicited 25 attendees signing up for the Bone Marrow Registry. Also touching to most of us involved with cultural activities in San Antonio for over a decade, was the heartfelt felicitation of the outgoing TASA President, Madhava Rao Govindaraju, with a warm speech by Afsar Mohammad, Telugu Lecturer for the Department of Asian Studies at UT Austin, and a paean of praise from Satyam Mandapati, read by Prasad Turlapati.

Over 60 kids and 20 adults participated in the cultural program. Starting with a melodiously rendered Ganesha Stuti by Srilakshmi Kadambala, the program quickly moved to two classical dances by the Kaveri Natya Yoga masterfully coordinated by Dr. Sreedhara Akkihebbalu. The choice of ragas, voices, music, abhinaya and bhaava were excellent and the audience made its appreciation known with enthusiastic applause. These were interspersed with a foot-tapping medley of Athadu and Devadas movie dances by Manusri Kalakonda. Next was a skit (the first of two) by Telugu Badi students with a hilarious set of Q&A's between teacher and students. A sweetly patriotic song Telugu Koyila sung by Varun, Alekya and Aishwarya was followed by a Sankranti themed movie song and Om Namoh Shiva Rudraaya from the movie Khaleja. The Sankranti themed dance coordinated by Usha Govindaraju and Sridevi Mummidi and Chinnanati Smruthulu by Smt. Padma Devaguptapu captured the essence of this uniquely Telugu festival. Beautifully choreographed and performed classical dances, crowd pleasing teenage Panther Girls Movie Dance medley, followed by TASA Secretary Phani Atluri's vote of thanks completed the evening's celebrations.