New ASIE Board’s Goal to Enlarge Membership Base

BY JAWAHAR MALHOTRA

HOUSTON: Among the thousands of design professionals who work in the Bayou City, there certainly is no dearth of Indian architects and engineers who contribute their skills and talents in all types of endeavors and every industry. Houston is an engineering town and it is estimated that 60 to 70% of the South Asian population of nearly 150,000 is involved in this occupation in one way or the other.

Of that number, an estimated 80% are of Indian origin, with many first generation immigrants who have settled here for three to four decades. They are well regarded and established in companies, and maybe 100 or more have their own firms, while many others have already reached retirement age.

Realizing that this large pool of design professionals needed a voice of their own, the American Society of Indian Engineers and Architects was formed in 1994 and over the past four years has seen a revival in its mission through the strenuous efforts of their elected Presidents. Last year, the organization held a luncheon gala at the Omni Hotel on Riverway that drew the largest turnout ever for the ASIE as it feted newly elected Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner.

The President for that event, and his Executive Committee and Board turned over the gavel to the newly elected group that was ushered in at a swearing in ceremony held last Thursday, January 19 at the HESS Club on Westheimer. A packed room of over 100 people attended the first meeting of the year for the ASIE at the evening program that included a buffet dinner catered by Hyderbad House.

Outgoing ASIE President Naresh Kolli introduced his Board and then, in turn, everyone in the room stood up to introduce themselves. It was no surprise that many — perhaps half — were retired engineers and a few part-time consultants as they eagerly announced themselves. Kolli went over the highlights of his tenure and singled out Hashmet Doshi and Hanendra Bhat for their generous support for the Scholarship fund. Kolli went over the highlights of his tenure and singled out Hashmet Doshi and Hanendra Bhat for their generous support for the Scholarship fund. His term saw a donation of $10,000 to the Mayor’s Fund for Flood Relief and $10,000 worth of scholarships to students of Indian origin.

Chetan Vyas, elevated from Board Director to Vice President for 2017, introduced Judge Ravi Sandill of the 127th Harris County District Court, who was re-elected to his third four-year term in November, to administer the oath of office to the new Board. Donning his judge robes, Sandill swore in the Board who lined up in front of the audience. Sandill also spoke of his admiration of engineers and joked about how he quit pursuing a degree in chemical engineering at the University of Texas, Austin after he had to tackle differential equations! Jokes aside, Sandill said it was “hugely important that we get out into our community and influence regulatory boards and commissions.”

Incoming President Dinesh Shah, who has been a behind-the-scenes supporter of the ASIE since it was founded, introduced his new Board and Advisory Board and thanked them for their volunteering and service. Apart from Vyas, the Board consists of Gaju Patel, Secretary; Poolkeshi Patel, Treasurer; Madhu Kilambi, Chaitnya Gampa, Archana Sharma, Tej Kour and Sirish Madichetti.

Shah then outlined his goals for his tenure which include developing management and leadership skills for young engineers; an Adopt-A-Retired-Engineer program for their experience skills and adding to the membership rolls by asking current members to bring in at least one new one to the ASIE. He stressed involvement of the entire membership in his ambitious goals as “cannot be accomplished only by these nine people alone.” Kilambi closed out the evening with a message from Sugar Land Councilman Harish Jajoo who is has announced he will seek his final term, and announcing the next meeting on Thursday, February 16 at the HESS Club.