

Special services for special needs kids

New organisation Samarpan offers outlines a raft of services for PWDs and their families and carers, reports FARZANA SHAKIR

Samarpan is a Sanskrit word meaning 'giving yourself completely'. As such, it is an apt title for an organisation dedicated to improving the quality of life of people with disability, of Indian and South Asian origin in NSW.

Samarpan Inc was launched as an organisation in late June. Secretary Rajni Chandran told *Indian Link* that nearly 200 people gathered at Epping Community Centre for the official ceremony.

Amongst the invitees were politicians, cultural organisations, high profile members of society, service providers, members and their families. The attendees were treated to audio-video presentations describing the services, goals and aspirations of Samarpan. There were talks by health care professionals on issues of intellectual disability, the importance of support networks for persons with disability, and multicultural community support. Impressive performances and presentations by persons with disability won everyone's heart.

Sidharth, Rajni's 25-year-old son with autism prepared a presentation based on a poem he composed. Also featured were shots of his swimming accomplishments and camp trip. Another commendable presentation was that of Raishav on netball, along with songs by Preshant and Arun.

There are 3,000 persons with severe disabilities from South Asian backgrounds in Sydney alone, requiring ongoing care. Rajni pointed out that informally the organisation has been operating for many years. It was started by

two mothers in Sydney in 2002, as a support group for families of children with disability. By 2008, a small group had formed, and in June 2012 Samarpan was registered as an association. The year that followed allowed board members to work out the roles and goals of the organisation to best address the needs of South Asian families with People With Disabilities (PWD), before officially launching this year.

The aim of Samarpan is to provide opportunities for people with disability of South Asian origin to socialise and form long-term relationships amongst themselves. Samarpan especially aims to help children facing developmental disability that starts at an early age, and continues through life. The organisation is trying to build a support network for families of such children and to develop culturally appropriate services to suit their needs.

One of the most important services planned by Samarpan is the development of an accommodation model that will meet the long-term care needs of the disabled adult child of a Samarpan family. The project has been named 'Aashray'.

Further explaining the project, Rajni said, "The accommodation that we envisage will cater to the needs of individuals who need round the clock care or supervision, who have an established relationship, and who are of South Asian background. Ashray as a project is in its budding stage. We are looking at setting up a blueprint for the type of accommodation we think will meet the needs of our clients. The blueprint will then be presented to various agencies and individuals

to enlist their support. We hope to soon provide people with disability of South Asian culture a purpose-built, safe and permanent place to live with their families, maintain links with the community, stay connected with their culture, and have employment, leisure and other opportunities".

Samarpan also runs 'Aadhaar,' a support group for families which meets once a month for organised activities like bowling and picnics. The idea is to let families enjoy time together with their children with disabilities, in order to strengthen family ties. Aadhaar celebrates carers week every year, with the next meet on July 28 at AMF Bowling in Castle Hill, and anyone of South Asian background with a PWD is welcome to attend.

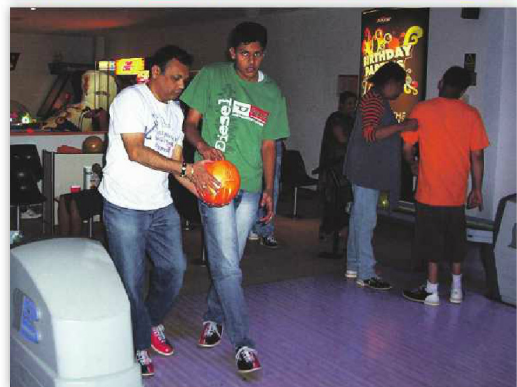
'Mitralay', another Samarpan initiative is a social club for people with disabilities which meets once a month. Field games, excursions and other activities are organised to help members socialise. Mitralay is supported by the Hornsby Council.

Samarpan's advocacy program 'Aagrah' endeavours to represent its members in community forums, submissions to government and providing information on disability funding, services and benefits available.

At the same time, 'Udyog' is the program run by Samarpan to help people with disabilities find meaningful work to raise their self-esteem and help them contribute to society in a positive manner.

Samarpan Inc is an independent organisation which relies on various funding sources to run its programs.

"We hope private donors,



government funding and community philanthropists will help make our goals a reality, and judging by the response to the inaugural ceremony, there is tremendous goodwill in the South Asian community," Rajni said optimistically.

Samarpan is planning an information session on diet and nutrition for mothers and carers of PWD towards the end of the year. The meeting will include information and help on modifying common South Asian recipes to make them wholesome for people with disability. The date of the

session is yet to be decided, but next on Samarpan's calendar is an information session on the National Disability Insurance Scheme/ Disability Care on August 31 in North Parramatta. Barbel Winter, Executive Director of Futures Upfront will help South Asian families of persons with disabilities have a better understanding of the new NDIS which is now called Disability Care Australia.

Rajni Chandran can be contacted on 0432 798 938 or call Caroline on 0402 596 813 for registration of attendance.

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