

THE OPTIMIST

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A Message from the President

In 2025, we began a new chapter for our organization as we elected our new Board of Directors. These dedicated individuals bring diverse expertise, deep community roots and a shared passion for advancing IACAN's cause. Our mission to raise cancer awareness, and to serve patients, caregivers and survivors with compassion and strength has never been more important. We were able to expand our impact and strengthen our programs. We also explored new outreach initiatives and expanded our educational activities to reach individuals and families in the South Asian community.

Our focus remained clear: provide practical resources, emotional support, and a compassionate network for patients, caregivers, and survivors, so that no one faces cancer alone. Community partnership will be at the heart of everything we do. We invite you to engage with us—attend an event, volunteer your time, share our message, or simply reach out to someone who may need support. Together, we can raise awareness, strengthen support systems, and make a lasting difference in the lives of those impacted by cancer. Thank you for being a part of this mission and for standing with us as we move forward with purpose and compassion.

SHILPA GHURYE, PH.D., J.D., PRESIDENT, IACAN



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IACAN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit cancer resource organization dedicated to serving the South Asian community through education, resources, and compassionate support for those affected by cancer. Our vision is that every South Asian reduces their cancer risk by maintaining a healthy lifestyle—and that no South Asian travels the cancer journey alone.



Educational Outreach: Breast Cancer Awareness Panel

April 12, 2025 | Ashtalakshmi Temple, Sugar Land

BY **SHOBHA PAI, M.S., M.B.A, IACAN**

During the Hanuman Jayanti celebrations at the Ashtalakshmi Temple, IACAN hosted an engaging and informative panel discussion on breast cancer awareness for an audience of nearly 100 community members. The event brought together a distinguished panel of experts – Dr. Nina Tamirisa, Breast Surgical Oncologist at MD Anderson Cancer Center; Dr. Priya Ramshesh, Hematology Oncologist at Houston Methodist; and Ms. Nita Pahwa, licensed dietitian nutritionist specializing in cancer care. The discussion was moderated by Ms. Shobha Pai, Secretary and Director on the IACAN Executive Board. Dr. Shilpa Ghurye kicked off the event by welcoming the audience and spotlighting the mission, vision, and the programs developed and supported by the organization in service of the South Asian community. The panel of experts addressed a wide range of questions related to the entire spectrum of breast cancer. Specifically, the questions addressed risk factors, role of nutrition, screening guidelines, imaging modalities in screening, the importance of biomarkers and staging, significance of genetic testing, multimodality treatment with surgery, radiation, and medicines, and surveillance guidelines.

Dr. Priya Ramshesh briefly discussed the role of bone marrow transplantation in the treatment of certain blood cancers. Ms. Pai shared emphasized IACAN’s longstanding commitment to the National Bone Marrow Registry, noting that since 2009, IACAN has sponsored more than 100 bone marrow drives, adding thousands of South Asian donors to the registry in partnership with the Gulf Coast Marrow program. The session reinforced the importance of culturally tailored education and community engagement in improving cancer outcomes.



IACAN Celebrates the International Day of Yoga

June 22, 2025 | Southdown Park, Pearland

BY **SHILPA GHURYE, PH.D., J.D., IACAN AND ACHALESH AMAR, M.S., IACAN**



IACAN proudly joined hands with Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) of America, the City of Pearland, Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, Sewa International, and SVYASA USA to celebrate the 11th International Day of Yoga. Held at Southdown Park, the event featured demonstrations of Surya Namaskar and sound meditation, creating a serene and uplifting environment for participants.

Dr. Shilpa Ghurye and Ms. Neeta Pahwa interacted with the community sharing information about IACAN's services for South Asian cancer patients and their caregivers. The event offered a meaningful opportunity to connect with the community and promote the role of yoga in enhancing physical and emotional well-being. IACAN extends heartfelt thanks to VHP of America for providing a platform to engage with the broader Indian American community.

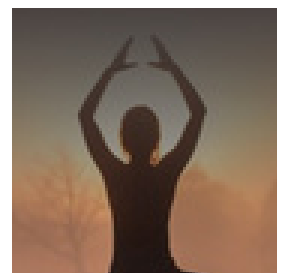


Summer 2025 Mind Body Healing Yoga Program

BY **NEETA PAHWA, M.S., IACAN**

Last year, IACAN successfully completed another season of its Mind Body Healing Yoga Program facilitated by yoga instructors from SVYASA USA. The program offered participants a restorative and grounding experience from the comfort of their homes. Held from May 10th through June 28th, the eight-week virtual series provided guided yoga sessions designed to renew energy and build functional strength as the community transitioned into the warmer months.

The program brought together familiar faces from across the Greater Houston area, creating a warm and supportive virtual space each week. The continued enthusiasm for this program reflects the community's appreciation for accessible wellness resources and IACAN's commitment to supporting survivors and caregivers through holistic practices.





Mammogram Program for Uninsured Women

September 13, 2025 | Life and Soul Free Health Fair, Manvel

BY SHILPA GHURYE, PH.D., J.D., IACAN AND NEETA PAHWA, M.S., IACAN

IACAN partnered with Love to Share Foundation America and The Rose to sponsor mammograms for uninsured South Asian women aged 40 and older at the 2025 Life and Soul Free Health Fair. Held in Manvel, Texas, the event provided a vital opportunity for women to access preventive screening services that might otherwise be out of reach.



IACAN was represented by Dr. Shilpa Ghurye and Ms. Neeta Pahwa, Patient navigator and board member, who shared information about IACAN’s programs and the support services that are available to cancer patients and caregivers. IACAN extends sincere gratitude to Love to Share Foundation America, including Dr. Lekshmi Nair, for the opportunity to serve the South Asian community, and to The Rose for partnering with IACAN to provide these essential mammogram services.

Cancer Warriors’ Painting Event

October 7, 2025 | Red Blue Arts School, Sugar Land

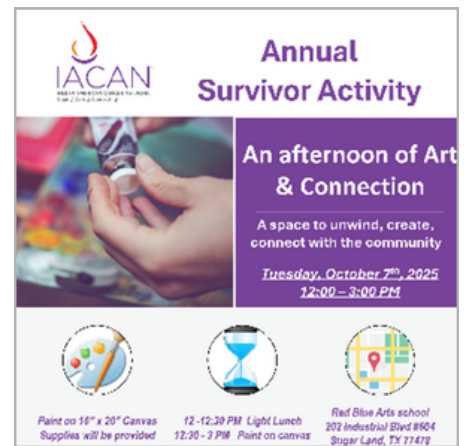
BY DIPIKA VARIA, B.S., IACAN

IACAN hosted its seventh annual Survivors’ Painting Event at the vibrant and welcoming Red Blue Arts School in Sugar Land. The studio’s bright walls, creative energy, and colorful displays provided the perfect backdrop for an afternoon dedicated to healing, expression, and togetherness.

Around 30 survivors and caregivers gathered for this special program, filling the space with warmth, conversation, and laughter. Participants were guided step-by-step through a painting activity that encouraged them to explore their creativity, regardless of prior experience.

A light lunch was served, giving everyone a chance to relax, connect, and share stories in a supportive environment. The atmosphere was uplifting and deeply meaningful, reminding all present of the strength and resilience that define our survivor community.

The event was a resounding success, offering a therapeutic outlet and strengthening the sense of community among attendees. IACAN is grateful to Red Blue Arts School for providing such an inspiring space and looks forward to continuing this cherished tradition in the years ahead.



HOPE Clinic Cancer Prevention & Awareness Fair August 30, 2025 | Houston

BY **SHILPA GHURYE, PH.D., J.D., IACAN** AND **POOJA SHAH, PH.D., IACAN**

IACAN was honored to participate in the Cancer Prevention and Awareness Health Fair hosted by HOPE Clinic in Houston. Surrounded by dedicated healthcare professionals, community leaders, and families, IACAN was represented by Dr. Shilpa Ghurye, and Dr. Pooja Shah, board member, who shared the organization’s mission to empower the South Asian community through education, early detection, and culturally sensitive support.

The event fostered meaningful conversations and offered attendees valuable resources. IACAN extends heartfelt thanks to the Asian American Health Coalition – HOPE Clinic, Asian Cancer Council, Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum, and RICE for creating this impactful platform. The fair underscored the power of community-driven outreach and collaboration in advancing public health.



IACAN-NMDP Collaboration at Sewa International Garba October 2025

BY **DIPIKA VARIA, B.S., IACAN** AND **GAYTRI KAPOOR, NMDP**

Sewa International’s Garba celebration in October 2025 was not only a vibrant cultural event but also a meaningful opportunity for service. IACAN partnered with the National Marrow Donor Program (NMDP) to host an informational booth dedicated to raising awareness about the critical need for stem cell donors within the Indian community.

Throughout the evening, attendees visited the booth to learn about the life-saving impact of stem cell donation. High school volunteers joined IACAN and NMDP representatives, gaining firsthand experience in community service and helping to engage visitors in conversations about joining the registry.

The response was overwhelmingly positive, with many individuals taking the important step of registering as potential donors. IACAN extends sincere gratitude to Sewa International for hosting this impactful event and to all volunteers and attendees who contributed to its success. Together, we continue to bring hope to patients and families awaiting a match.



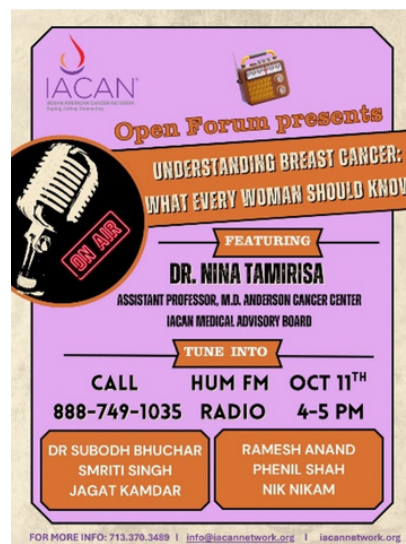
Breast Cancer Awareness Radio Show on Hum FM

October 11, 2025 | Open Forum Houston

BY **NINA TAMIRISA, M.D.**

In October, IACAN participated in a special broadcast on Hum FM radio to raise awareness about breast cancer within the South Asian community. Dr. Nina Tamirisa, medical advisory board member at IACAN, discussed the importance of early detection and regular screening, the various types of breast cancer, and advances in both medical and surgical treatment.

The conversation also addressed the role of genetics, the often-overlooked issue of male breast cancer, and the persistent challenges surrounding access to care. Dr. Tamirisa highlighted both modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors and emphasized lifestyle changes that can help reduce risk. The program reached a wide audience and reinforced IACAN's commitment to accessible, culturally informed cancer education.



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