

IndoPak Charity Dinner Takes on World Hunger

According to UNICEF, one-third of the world's malnourished children live in India. Andover's Indian and Pakistani Society (IndoPak) worked to combat this statistic by holding a charity event to raise money for the Akshaya Patra Foundation last Friday.

Every day, Akshaya Patra Foundation serves freshly prepared school meals to 1.3 million children in India to fight hunger, promote education and eradicate poverty — one child at a time. Nine thousand schools throughout India participate in the program, and nine states in India collaborate with Akshaya Patra, according to Meera Bhan '14, Co-Head of IndoPak.

"It's important to bring this issue to campus because often we live in our 'Andover Bubble' and forget that there are children in the world who don't receive the basic human rights of food and education. With our privileged position, we must help those in need, and the charity dinner was a logical, fun way to do this," said Bhan.

Janine Ko '14, who attended the dinner, travelled to India this past summer with the Niswarth Program and witnessed such poverty first hand. "We spent two or three days just walking through slums and we went on a tour through one of the biggest slums in Asia, which was really jarring. I remember all of the kids would line up outside to eat their lunches," said Ko.

Friday's event started with a traditional Indian dinner provided by day students and their families. The dinner included naan, a type of leavened bread; chicken tikka, a dish of boneless chicken pieces in curry; palak paneer, consisting of fried cubes of cottage cheese in spinach; and mango ice cream for dessert.

In addition to the dinner, the evening included student performances.

Dressed in traditional Indian clothing, Sharan Gill '16, Sitara Rao '16 and Mihika Sridhar '16 performed a Bollywood-style dance set to "Dhoom 2," a popular, energetic song.

"The really colorful and sparkly things that most of us were wearing would probably be worn at a special event or wedding, just as fancier Western clothing is worn for special events in America. But all Indian clothing, regardless of if it's for something simple or fancy, will have some sort of pattern, which I think is just more fun than solid-colored western clothing," said Gill.

Sridhar said, "The Charity Dinner is always a great way to share my culture with the Andover community. IndoPak members dress in colorful Indian clothing and show others the food and entertainment we love. The best part of the dinner, however, was raising money for Akshaya Patra to help feed poor children in India. It means a lot to the club that we're able to contribute to the well-being of those less fortunate than us, especially in a country close to our roots."

To encourage students to donate to Akshaya Patra, biographies of impoverished children in India were placed on each table, introducing the children and families who benefit from the foundation and sharing the children's future hopes and aspirations.

"[The stories] were just kind of anecdotes from different kids to create a more personal connection so the people at the dinner knew what they were donating to," said Poonam Kamdar '14.

Ko said, "The IndoPak dinner was cool because now I've seen both sides of the spectrum — both the fundraising side and the result of that."

Soha Sanchorawala '14, Co-Head of IndoPak, added, "Each term, IndoPak has one major event. As a member of IndoPak for four years, I have found that it is in these three nights every year that I find a true community. This night aligns very much so with the mission of IndoPak as a club — to foster a sense of community for South Asians and friends and to celebrate South Asian culture on campus... I am so proud to have been able to share that culture with everyone who participated in the event."

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