



Executive Board members at 2003 Upkar banquet

## Upkar helps needy second generation Indian students

BY J.V. LAKSHMANA RAO

**Chicago:** It is not always true to assume that all second generation Indians in this country are financially strong. There are many bright youngsters whose progress has been stalled because of acute shortage of financial resources.

Although there are many Indian organizations in this country which concentrate on helping the less fortunate people living back home, there are hardly any organizations that take care of second generation Indians in the US. That gap has been partly bridged by Upkar of the Washington DC-based Indo American Community Foundation.

Upkar, which was formed in 1997, has been the vision of Dr. Sreedhar Potarazu, a physician, who heads Vital Spring, a medical consultancy firm; Dr. P.C. Kumar, professor at American University Kogod School of Business; Shekar Narasimhan, CEO of Beekman Advisors, an investment advisory business; and some other likeminded people.

Upkar was started with the basic premise that there are and will continue to be significant human needs in the Indo-American community in the USA. Dr. Shreedhar was convinced there was a need in the USA and there was a feeling in his generation that "we were too fixated on problems in India and not enough on where we live and work."

Working on the modalities for helping the needy second generation Indians for about a year, Upkar has started awarding scholarships to students focusing exclusively on a need-based criterion.

In the past six years, Upkar has processed 345 applications and awarded 60 scholarships to college-going students.

**India Tribune** spoke to Shekar Narasimhan, Dr. Kumar and Jo Ramachandran, an active volunteer, to elicit information about Upkar's work in helping the needy second generation Indian students.

Narasimhan said that Upkar awarded scholarships to needy gifted students with minimum GPA each year. "The scholarship awardees are spread all over the country. They are in California, Texas, Michigan, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Florida, etc. The awards are not confined to any particular region or state; they are given nationwide. The need is outstripping the resources," he added.

Asked how the selection is made for the award of scholarships, he said that panels are created each year and the applications are forwarded to them for selection. The students must demonstrate the need and recognized talent. The scholarship amount of \$2,000 is awarded to the needy student on each qualifying year for four years spent in a post-secondary institution. Scholarship renewals are dependent on meeting the GAP requirements established by the board. To qualify for a scholarship, the applicant must be a US citizen or US permanent resident and be the descendant of Indian immigrants. The scholarships are unique because they are not loans. "We want to encourage our youth to pursue disciplines in which we are under-represented to broaden the stature of Indo-

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