

## Share Our Secrets (SOS)

### A Roadmap to Building the Life You Want.

BY FARIDA HASANALI

Imagine this. You are trekking in the Himalayas and come upon a cave glowing with an ethereal light. Bravely you step inside and see two things... the fountain of youth and a book that answers all of your questions. You can only pick one! Which one would you pick?

You may say you'd pick the fountain of youth, as you'd have enough time to figure out all of life's answers by yourself. Or you might want the book of answers, a reference guide that tells you what to do in most situations.

In my case, I would most likely walk away from both. For one, who wants to live forever? And wouldn't life be boring if we knew all the answers? There would be no excitement in living, seeing new things, or figuring out why we are here on this earth.

Fortunately for all of us, neither the book nor the fountain of youth exists (at least not that we know of) so that leaves us to figure out the complexities of our life, our world, and our societies and we've been doing just that since the dawn of mankind. Before books, people learned from their parents and elders. Then we had schools, teachers, books, and now the Internet.

Why is it then that we don't know everything there is to know, or the right things to do and say at the right time? Why was it that even in the cases where we did know, we still chose not to practice the appropriate behaviors? A simple example is that of staying fit. We know that we should eat healthy, exercise, drink lots of water, and avoid alcohol, fatty and processed foods. This information is available everywhere and yet 69% of adults in America are overweight or obese. What's worse is that 42% of our children ages 2-19 are obese too. It's because learn-

ing typically does not happen in a vacuum. We learn not just by reading but by observing modeled behavior, by experiencing the impacts of our behaviors and through the support of others in our lives by way of our families or communities. We learn differently through a composite of many different mediums.

The Share Our Secrets (SOS) Program founded four years ago is one such composite program. It creates a learning environment unlike any other and consists of four different learning streams: The Life and Leadership Series, Luncheon Speaker Series, SOS Connect, and The Circle of Influence.

The Life and Leadership Series held over 8-10 months starts in August each year. A select group of 10-12 individuals is hand selected by the SOS Executive Board to attend 10 sessions. We look for candidates who are eager to learn, open to the idea of change, and ready to embrace a different way of thinking and view of life. The curriculum covers guidance on personal and professional issues that we deal with everyday such as learning to negotiate, finding a job at any point in your life, and defining love, success, happiness and leverage. This program exposes members to a broad variety of subjects covering current news, historical, religious, and philosophical perspectives, and application to daily life. Members are encouraged to bring current life challenges to the session for discussion to get varied perspectives on how an issue can be addressed.

"The class atmosphere is so charged," said Dr. Swapan Dubey. "I find myself anxiously waiting for the next class so my routine mindset can be challenged and I can learn something new."





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*Biki Mohindra (center) with the Graduating Class 2013 - Siddharth Dhar, Zal Sethna, Shafiq Shivji, Swapan Dubey, MD, Gina Patel, Amol Kulkarni, Mitul Patel, Manasi Gokhale, Vignesh Veer, Farida Hasanali, Russell Richard*

The SOS Member Speaker Series provides an avenue for accomplished members/seniors in our society to share their secrets of success with SOS Life and Leadership Series students and SOS members who want to learn from other's experiences. Speakers from varied backgrounds and areas of accomplishment are invited to speak at lunch and everyone is encouraged to ask questions with an effort to learn from the speaker's experience. Successful entrepreneurs like Mark Ostrofsky, entrepreneur and author of "Click it Rich"; Shawn Wharton, CIO, BP Nagpur; Amit Bhandari, CEO of BioUrja Trading; Felix Fraga, Houston City Council member; Somesh Singh, VP Engineering and GM India Development Center at NetIQ; Dr. Johnella Bradford, Dean – Houston Community College Southeast; are a few examples of the caliber of speakers that the SOS program delivers. What's even more exciting is that they are open to being mentors for SOS students depending on the applicability of the speakers experience to the individual's needs.

SOS' Circle of Influence (COI) is a group of high potential members, most of them graduates of the Life and Leadership Series who support each other to further their goals in life. COI hosts events throughout the year that are intended to support the businesses or jobs of its members. COI Chairman Vivek

Mehta, Sr. Vice President at Bank of Texas, is always striving to deliver quality events that support effective results-oriented networking for the COI and its guests. The upcoming event to be held at the River Oaks Country Club in September 2013, is one such unique opportunity where COI members invite their best clients or potential clients to showcase their prowess in the community. This will be the third such event for SOS and its Circle of Influence.

The success of SOS' existing programs; the Life and Leadership Series, Speaker Series and COI and the increased demand for more participation has led to the creation of SOS Connect. This program is designed for history, philosophy, and religion lovers and lifelong learners who are always trying to understand the past, present, and future and how it impacts who we are today, how we interact with others, and why we are who we are. "Learning about the social origins of mankind is instrumental in understanding why people react in certain ways and how we can deal with them effectively; it's hard to believe we've been doing this for a year and the enthusiasm has not waned one bit. In fact more people want to join," said Biki Mohindra, co-founder of SOS.

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*Farida Hasanali is a free lance writer for several Indo American community publications. She has been writing for publications and newspapers for the past 10 years. Hasanali, leverages her writing skills to increase awareness of social issues and causes, and everyday challenges our community members feel as part of two distinct cultures. In her day job, Hasanali works as a Knowledge & Program Manager for BP's Remediation Management Division. Community Service is a passion for Hasanali, through her association with NetIP Houston and SOS, Hasanali is able to impact positive change in other's lives.*

