

Apna Ghar Celebrates 25 Years Of Service To Women

From Chicago Bureau



Apna Ghar celebrated its 25th anniversary gala, marking two-and-half decades of service to women late last month with music, awards and a keynote address by Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus.

More than 350 guests turned up for the celebration Sept. 24 at the Hilton Hotel in downtown Chicago.

Yunus inspired and challenged the audience to think creatively to solve problems like gender violence which is at the core of Apna Ghar's mission, and is a global human rights and public health concern.

"Empowering women in general and those who belong to poorer sections of the society in particular – by diversifying and enriching their income generation potential –, holds the key to break the vicious circle of poverty," he said. Yunus added that a culture of self-employment and entrepreneurship among women will generate additional incomes which will bring not only social but also financially positive outcomes for households and for the society at large.

Apna Ghar a nonprofit organization which started out as a volunteer-run crisis helpline and was founded by five Asian-Indian women. Today it has transformed into a comprehensive housing, advocacy, case management, and counseling and visitation agency for victims of domestic violence and serves the greater immigrant and non-immigrant communities across Chicagoland. It has earned national acclaim for being one of the first South Asian organizations of its kind.

Thomas Choi, public affairs manager at the Illinois Comptroller Leslie Geissler Munger's office, marked Apna Ghar's 25th anniversary with a proclamation presented to Apna Ghar's executive director Neha Gill who also serves on the Comptroller's Asian American Advisory Council.

Alderman James Cappleman of the 46th ward shared his personal story and motivation for public service and support of Apna Ghar. A video presentation of Apna Ghar's 25 years of journey highlighting Apna Ghar's current programs that are nationally recognized as models of best practice was shown to the guests and attendees.

Sameer Chhabria, board vice president, talked about the construction of the new home that will double the current capacity to house women and children in need of the Apna Ghar services. Guests were entertained by Chicago's own Fareed Haque, guitarist and jazz virtuoso. His music and his band MathGames inspired the audience to think about the intersections of art and activism.

Longtime supporters and friends of Apna Ghar, the Ramzan and Parvin Dhanji Family Foundation, Ashima Mehta, Shakuntala Chhabria, Surinder Nand and Danial Noorani received awards for their ongoing support and commitment to Apna Ghar.

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