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For immediate release

GOPIO CONNECTICUT CELEBRATES FIVE YEARS AND HONORS FIVE AT ITS ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET

Stamford, CT. April 9, 2011. GOPIO Connecticut honored five for their achievements and contributions to the community – Dr. Madhu Mathur, Dr. Vijay Prashad, Mrs. Vidya Teredesai, Mr. Paul Semanski and Ms. Mequitta Ahuja.

The elegant gold, pink and orange-themed event which included a cocktail reception, dinner, dance performances by local artists and live music, was attended by over 200 Indian-American community leaders, supporters and public officials – including **Stamford Mayor Michael Pavia, Dr. Ajai Gondane, Deputy Consul General** from the Indian Consulate in New York, and **former Lt. Governor, Michael Fedele**. Also attending, were several members of the senior management team of Stamford Hospital, Silver Sponsor of the event.

The award for achievement in arts and letters went to **Dr. Vijay Prashad** who holds the George and Martha Kellner Chair in South Asian History, and is Professor of International Studies at Trinity College, Hartford, CT. He has published several books on world governance.

Dr. Madhu Mathur is a tireless advocate for children's health. She is the founding member of Stamford's Childhood Obesity Task Force. In addition, she is Medical Director of the Regional Medical Home Initiative and Chair of the Health and Wellness Committee of Childhood Blueprint Initiative in Stamford.

Mrs. Vidya Teredesai was recognized for her community service here and in India. She has raised funds for homeless shelters, Norwalk Senior Center, Evergreen Foundation as well as Women's Hospital in Baroda.

Friend of India Award went to **Mr. Paul Semanski** who serves as a Co-Coordinator for Asha Hartford, which organizes several fundraisers each year on behalf of the Navsarjan Trust Schools for disadvantaged girls in Gujarat and the DF Blind School in Kolkata.

The Young Person Awardee was **Ms. Mequitta Ahuja**, who is a visual artist. Her work has been exhibited across the United States, in Paris, Brussels, Berlin, India and Dubai. In February 2010, she was profiled in ArtNews as "Artist to Watch."

In welcoming the guests and dignitaries, Shailesh Naik, President of GOPIO-CT said "we are celebrating the achievements of five distinguished individuals, who deserve our recognition. We congratulate them and are proud of their achievements."

Mayor Pavia said "I am honored to be here to celebrate among friends and am thankful for the warm welcome the Indian community has always extended to me and my wife, Maureen." He also congratulated GOPIO-CT for its five years of service and bringing the Indian community together.

Dr. Gondane congratulated the awardees for "bringing honor to your Indian heritage. We are all very proud of you."

Mr. Michael Fedele who attended along with his wife Carol said he was delighted to be at the event to honor the accomplishments of so many talented individuals.

Proclamations from Governor Malloy to the awardees were read

out at the awards ceremony.

Sarina Jain who was the Mistress of Ceremonies had the crowd on their feet in a group masala bhangra energy workout, prior to dinner of course! Good conversation, great food and rhythmic Bollywood music by DJ Magic Mike – a celebration of the vibrant Indian-American community in Connecticut.

GOPIO-CT - Global Organization of People of Indian Origin – serves as a non-partisan, secular, civic and community service organization – promoting awareness of Indian culture, customs and contributions of PIOs through community programs, forums, events and youth activities. It seeks to strengthen partnerships and create an ongoing dialogue with local communities. GOPIO is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

Over the last five years, GOPIO-CT has become an active and dynamic organization hosting interactive sessions with policy makers and academicians, community events, youth mentoring and networking workshops, and working with other area organizations to help create a better future.

For further information please contact ravidhingra@gopio-ct.org or visit www.gopio-ct.org.

Photos and captions:

Photo 1 – GOPIO-CT officials at the Annual Banquet. From L. to R.: Louella D’Silva, Sara Tierno, Shamla Sharma, Prakash Chakravarti, Ritu Johorey, Shailesh Naik, Sangeeta Ahuja, Shelly Nichani, Ravi Dhingra, Anita Bhat and Dr. Thomas Abraham

Photo 2 – Award recipients and dignitaries Stamford Mayor Michael Pavia, former CT. Lt. Governor Michael Fedele and Deputy Consul General Dr. A.M. Gondane, with GOPIO-CT board members.

Photo 3 – Dancing with Sarina Jain of Masala Bhangra