

COMMUNITY NEWS

Bambra Roots For A New Social Service Formula

Dr Charanjit Bambra is what they would call a 'prize catch' for the Canadian immigration system, the ideal kind of guy who is considered among the best in the rest of the world. "I arrived in 2001. Very early on, I realized that for very highly qualified people, the Canadian system will be very frustrating."

Dr Bambra's experience as a biotech scientist stretches from Africa to England to the South East Asia. Among the positions he has held are Chief Scientific Officer, Maccine Pte Ltd Australia, Professorial Fellow, University of Monash, and Chief of Research, WHO Institute Primate Research.

Having closely studied the system, Dr Bambra felt that he would be better off starting out on his own, rather than looking for work and face demeaning questions like 'do you have Canadian experience?' "I started my own consultancy services," he says. He has not looked back since then though most of the work that has come his way are once again international in nature, and not from Canada. "I used to travel extensively in South East Asia managing research in cutting edge areas in diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases. I was always on the move,

managing various research projects. That kept me away from home for long periods and two years ago, I decided to come back to Canada for good."



agency that was sincere about delivering service to the community rather than paying lip service." Of course, we have a lot of that variety with most of the funding going into

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He knew he wouldn't be in a 9 to 5 situation and he needed to do something more, stuff that men and women of a certain age start thinking about - of giving back to the community. "I was looking for an agency that is active in community service. And I wanted to identify an

creative and expensive ways to write resumes!

Dr Bambra says that he was happy to come across Social Services Network (SSN) chaired by Naushad Hirjee who invited him to be a Board Member.

One of the major projects they

have undertaken this May, the Asian Heritage Month, is to recognize the contributions of outstanding individuals from the South Asian community, especially the youth.

The SSN is also currently busy organizing a fundraiser in support of the elimination of poverty within the South Asian community and will take place on Saturday, May 26 at 7pm at Agincourt Collegiate. It will feature Aditi Sahani, renowned singer from Mumbai and local performers Darshak, Chandrima and Sunil Patel.

SSN is a grassroots organization whose goal is to promote and enhance the quality of life of the diverse South Asian community in the GTA and York Region and to deliver information and referral services to the community with cultural and linguistic sensitivity through partnerships developed with mainstream service providers.

Dr Bambra notes, "If you look at the landscape here, most people recognize the fact that the population mix is changing. The South Asian community is the largest in the GTA and we face numerous problems - family violence, poverty, unemployment, issue of seniors and others. And yet our social service

system that is centred around the mainstream community still plays the major role." Dr Bambra believes that social support and investment must be both led and directed by members so each community that needs help. "If you really look at the agencies delivering service, they are mostly in the mainstream and they have positioned themselves to fit easily into the funding pattern. Obtaining funding has become their primary goal and not searching out the needs of the community they are supposed to serve, and delivering it effectively. This whole issue has to be re-addressed."

Dr Bambra makes a good point especially these days when millions of dollars are earmarked for so-called immigrant welfare, but with very little accountability and even less measurable results. What the system needs is a vision, even a scientific one, that can make it more effective for those who need it, and not become million dollar resume writing classes.

Those interested in SSN fundraiser can contact either Naushad Hirji at 416.875.1269 or Charanjit Bambra at 647.403.4440. □



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