



MEA

MALAYALEE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION
HOUSTON-TEXAS



NEWSLETTER

— 2022-2023 —

What is MEA ?

The Malayalee Engineers' Association of Houston, TX is a professional, non profit, non political, and secular organization of engineering graduates of Malayalee origin. The organization provides a forum to professionally and socially interact, engage in charitable activities and find ways to promote organizational growth. Through its scholarship initiative, MEA provides financial assistance and mentoring to economically backward and academically brilliant undergraduate engineering students in India. MEA is a registered 501 (c)(3) non-profit charitable organization.



Message from **MEA** PRESIDENT

When a group of engineers had a discussion on sponsoring the education for skilled but under privileged students in the 90's is how the foundation for the MEA was laid. Rather than being just an association, having frequent meetings and cultural programs, MEA focused on a strong good will cause with sense of moral obligation towards the society. MEA now in 2022 have spread It's wings out of its pupa by growing out to cultural events, gathering events of all the MEA members and their families, and conducting fund raising events to mark the objectives.

“Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world” – Nelson Mandela

MEA enthralled on elevating the underprivileged but eligible Engineering students who emerged victorious with respectable ranks in the Kerala state entrance exam and sponsored their education by identifying the needful every year. Year after year MEA continues to do this activity not as a charity but as a responsibility towards our society.

When I took over the presidency of the MEA in 2021, My focus was to bring out the entire MEA members and their family out to breathe the fresh air and enjoy the warm sunlight. As the plan was carried out it resulted in a grant success and all the member, and their families enjoyed the moment of the picnic. Even though the picnic was a routine program every year, this year it stood with a lot of highlights among the members.

When the new team kick started the board this year, we were a team of vibrant members who had a good vibe between us and showcased an unrivalled performance handling the areas of Treasury, Secretary, Social outreach directors, Communication, Mentorship and broadcasting an efficient website presenting MEA in a grand scale among our communities. We were also blessed with the guidance provided by one of the senior MEA members which enabled us to navigate without many hurdles.

We carried out a lot of successful programs and activities entertaining and connecting the MEA members and their families through a get together and Live food full of fun. Also, we resumed the Onam celebrations in the MEA community after long time which was executed pointing out the strong Malayali culture and its authenticity by displaying Chenda Melam, Maveli Maharaja and feasting a Kerala style Sadhya which all were well enjoyed by our members and their families.

With high josh we carried out a camping program in the month of September, which was not just a success, but a total fun event received very well by the MEANs and family. The camping program strengthened the bond further among the MEANs and I am proud to have spearheaded such an event.

A badminton tournament was carried out among the MEA members sponsored by one of the local badminton associations in the month of October which resulted in a grant success where the MEA members displayed true sportsmanship during the tournament. In the same month one of the major successes which I recall during my presidency will be the fund-raising event named "High on Music" which resulted in a record collection of funds capable of sponsoring eight full scholarships. This success was a milestone displaying the unity and the capability of the MEANs.

Me and my team this year exhibited the biggest cultural event in the history of MEA named EUPHORIA'2022 in the month of December which will be carried out in the upcoming years as a brand supporting the MEA. In the month of January, we marked a milestone by founding the MEA day for the first time in the History of the MEA, which is planned to be carried forward by celebrating every year marking the day for the association rather than the other programs and cultural events. This year we were able to add 165 plus members to our MEA family successfully.

Subin C Balakrishnan
President, MEA

MEA - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

MALAYALEE ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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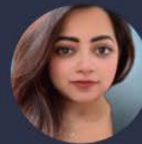
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PICNIC

MEA families were finally able to get together in person after a long period of boredom on 10 May 2022. The day was filled with fun activities, including tug of war (vadam vali), which were enjoyed by all the attendees. A live food counter stood by and delivered participants with delicious dosa. Current board members and a few tenured members met with some prospective members, enabling MEA to kick off the membership drive at the event. An engineering game was presented at the end, and the members grouped into teams to come up with engineering ideas and present them in an entertaining manner. We finished off the afternoon by playing a game of bingo.



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ONAM CELEBRATIONS

MEA families celebrated Onam on 27-Jul at Irene Stern Community center at Fulshear. It was very well received event by the MEA families and the tickets were sold out 3 days before the event.

The day started with Pookalam competition and multiple groups showcased their talent. The day progressed with chenda melam, multiple cultural activities, fashion show and finally ended with a tasty traditional Onam lunch.



CAMPING



Kudos to the MEA team for putting together a great camping experience. I got to meet some amazing people and have a great time. Thanks everyone
Very nice, memorable and superbly organized event, thank you everyone in the BOD for this splendid work, very well done! Made some very valuable memories.



Around 30 MEA families got together at Camp Allen on 17th and 18th September for a camping event. The camping ground was made available exclusively for MEA families. Families gathered at the camp ground on Saturday afternoon and started with few rounds of volley ball. The evening was filled with karaoke and dance performances by all participants that went late into the night. Delicious breakfast delivered by Apna Bazaar.

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APEX SIGNS & PRINT

BADMINTON



Annual MEA Badminton tournament was held on 12th November at Texas Badminton Center, Richmond. The event was organized in 3 different categories, Mens Doubles, Womens Doubles and Mixed Doubles. There were 40 entries, and it was a highly competitive event. It was really amazing to see the teams compete and the organizers and the audience witnessed high energetic games from our members.

Texas Badminton sponsored the event, and it was the first major event in their new facility. Thank you so much for this opportunity... well organized and congratulations to all winners !!

Thanks to the MEA board, committee and volunteers for conducting this badminton tournament



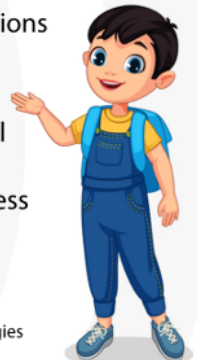
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HIGH ON MUSIC-MEA FUNDRAISER

MEA's Annual Fundraiser was held on 02nd October at St. Joseph's Hall, Stafford. The event was organized in partnership with Freedia Entertainment and Sri Guruyavurappan temple of Houston. It was live concert performed by prominent playback singers of Malayalam movie industry, Harish Sivaramakrishnan, Sithara Krishnakumar and Job Kurien. It was a completely sold out event. MEA families and sponsors made it a very successful event and MEA could raise funds to sponsor 8 full scholarships.

Thanks to the volunteers, who helped with selling the tickets on such a short notices. Special thanks to all the sponsors without whom this event would not have been possible.



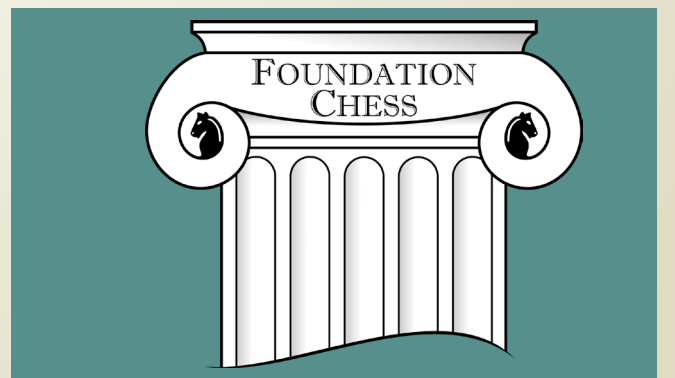
EUPHORIA 2022

MEA's annual cultural event took place on 10th December at the Knanaya Auditorium. Family members from over 80 MEA families participated in the event. The event started at 5.30 PM with the traditional event of lighting the lamp by the MEA Board members. Our President welcomed and addressed and guests and the scholarship committee gave an update on the scholarship process. Prizes were awarded to the winners of various MEA events. The evening was filled with some spectacular cultural performances by kids as well as adults. The cultural programs were followed by dinner from Apna Bazaar. It was truly an enjoyable evening for everyone.



MEA-ARTS AND SCIENCE DAY

MEA Organized an Arts and Science day for the first time in the history of MEA. The event was held on 28, January 2023 at Irene Stern Auditorium, Fulshear. Adults and kids from over 30 MEA families participated in the events. The day had Art competition for kids and adults. Th Chess competition for kids and adults was organized by FoundationChess.org and it was very professionally organized tournament. Members and kids also enjoyed the Arts and Science Quiz on the Kahoot platform and followed by an instance challenge for adults. All participants enjoyed the event and we expect it will be a much bigger event in the future.



SCHOLARSHIP UPDATE



WE BELIEVE THAT OUR SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM CAN MAKE A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OUR SCHOLARS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

We are pleased to share updates on the scholarship program. As previously announced, 11 students who began undergraduate studies in 2021 were awarded scholarships this year. Our commitment to supporting previous year scholars from the scholarship programs remains steadfast as they progress towards completing their degree. The scholarship committee is currently in the process of vetting applications for the 2022 scholarship program. We encourage interested members to volunteer for the scholarship committee, where you would play a vital role in reviewing scholarship applications and selecting deserving candidates. If you are interested in volunteering for this committee, please contact the board about your willingness to volunteer.

This year, we increased our focus on the mentoring of the scholars. The mentoring program aims to provide scholars with guidance and support throughout their academic journey. We have matched each scholar with a mentor who can provide advice, help navigate academic challenges, and serve as a role model. We believe that mentoring can have a significant impact on scholars' academic success and personal development. As part of the mentoring program, we also conducted a learning session on higher education, with members who have done higher education abroad sharing their experiences with the scholars. If you are interested in becoming a mentor for existing scholars, please contact the board for more information on the mentor matching process.

We are grateful to all our donors and sponsors for their generous contributions that make these scholarships possible. We believe that our scholarship program can make a meaningful difference in the lives of our scholars and their families.

We look forward to continuing to support the academic pursuits of deserving students in the future.



HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TO MEA



The source of funds for MEA are from the generous donations from the members and the contribution made by the sponsors. Please visit <https://meahouston.org/donate/> to donate. Any amount is welcome and your contribution will certainly make a difference in a student's future. MEA is a 501 (c)(3) organization and donations made to MEA can tax deductible depending on your tax bracket.

In addition to funds, MEA needs volunteers who can play active role in organizing various MEA events. Some of the volunteer opportunities are around membership drives, MEA events etc. A notification will be sent out whenever there is need for volunteers and you can always get in touch with the MEA Board of Directors to learn about the existing volunteer opportunities.

Members can also help the scholarship committee who spends a lot of time going through applications from candidates, short listing the candidates and performing the site visits to identify candidates who genuinely need help.

MEA Mentorship is also a way to contribute. MEA Mentorship provides opportunities to mentor a MEA scholar. The mentor keeps in touch with the mentee constantly and updates the group about the mentorship progress.

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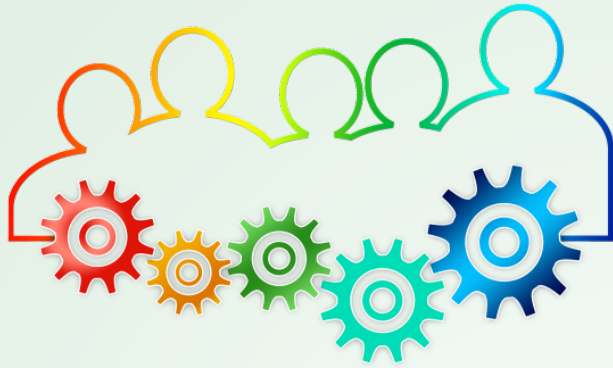
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MEA KERALA

Since 2000, the MEA Scholarship Project has provided continuous support to well-deserving students in Kerala and has achieved operational excellence. Around 2012, Vijay Kayath was instrumental in organizing former MEA awardees into a group with a goal of exploring ways to include them in helping future awardees in their academic, career and financial prospects. Vijay met with some of the past awardees during his trips to India, helping form a small number of committed engineers engaging in this mission of reciprocating meaningful support to other deserving MEA awardees.

The group was named MEAK and they had an MOU with another charitable group in Kerala, 'CETA-Galaxy/HOPE', initially to facilitate banking operations to collect and distribute funds for the MEAK scholarship award. At this time, MEAK is operating independently and is in the process of registering as a charitable organization in Kerala.

The MEA alumni who support MEAK have grown in numbers and have reached a critical quorum to maintain their activity. The COVID pandemic hampered their progress, but they have resurged with renewed support. The scholarships awarded in Indian rupees are of a lesser amount and are fully supported by donations received in rupees in India. MEA Houston does not provide any funding and does not have any administrative controls over the scholarship program in India.

Over the past few years, MEAK has been able to sponsor one or two students each year from those who were shortlisted for an MEA award, thanks to the persistent efforts of a small volunteer-core. The process for receiving an MEAK award is as follows: First, the MEA Scholarship evaluation committee releases a short-list of finalists (typically, around 25) after processing the large pool of applications it receives every year.

Each finalist undergoes a verification process, where a MEA volunteer visits the student's home in Kerala and produces a report verifying the criteria-based aspects of the student's application, to the MEA Scholarship evaluation committee.

The Scholarship evaluation committee then produces a ranked list of eligible students for an award. MEA scholarships are awarded to students from this list based on the annual fundraising budget. From finalists that were not awarded MEA scholarships due to funding limitations, MEAK selects one or two students for an MEAK award.

This year, MEAK will be able to support at least two students, thanks to contributions from past MEA alumni and a generous sponsor in India.

For MEA members, friends, and family, contributing to MEAK scholarship fundraisers using funds based in India opens up avenues for supporting the Scholarship Project. All of us at MEA Houston look forward to the growth of MEAK and engagement amongst MEA alumni, as they multiply the efforts of the MEA Scholarship Project.

Stop & Smell the Roses

CAROLINE JAMES

ture we live in, we are often racing against time to achieve success in ways and standards defined by society. With our packed schedules, we often forget to be present in the now. When you start to live for the small moments, with authenticity and good intent in everything you do, you begin to savor each moment – be it waking up to watch the sunrise, reading a book cozying up in a blanket with your favorite music playing, listening to your kids converse, having a soulful conversation with your friends or savoring a home cooked meal.

Life may not be all sunshine or unicorns but when you pause, slow down, stop and smell the roses, you will begin to be more thankful, appreciative, and truly see the magic in the ordinary. As William Blake aptly said:

“To see a world in a grain of sand,
And heaven in a wildflower,
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
An eternity in an hour!”

It was a regular work week and my monkey mind toggled through a billion thoughts of project deadlines from work and the unfinished to-do lists piled up from the weekend. My train of thoughts was interrupted by a message notification on my phone from my dad informing about the sudden demise of my classmate and friend from 12 th Grade. She was ecstatic to celebrate her 10 th anniversary with her spouse in Hawaii. But everything changed in a matter of seconds. In an unforeseen moment, her husband got pulled into the water by the 8-foot waves lashing near the shoreline. She jumped in to save his life. Unfortunately, the fury of waves engulfed them both into its wrath ending their time here on this earthly abode. It took me a minute to absorb this information and register what I had just read.

I remembered my friend as a truly kind, helpful and chirpy soul with a beautiful smile on her face. Watching her funeral proceedings online got me choked up and teary-eyed but it broke my heart even further to hear her mom speak. She never imagined that her daughter’s recent phone call would be the last time she would ever hear from her.

It made me contemplate on the vulnerability of life and reminded me of how fleeting each moment truly is. In the hustle cul-



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BICYCLE DREAM

DEEPTHI VISWANATHAN NAIR

It was a rainy morning; the boy woke with moody face because he was thinking about the hassle to walk to his school through the muddy road again with full of dirty water as there is no proper drainage in their area. He never wanted to be a boy getting wet and wearing muddy pant to go to the high school class, it takes more than 40 minutes' walk to reach the school located in the town. Most of his friends are coming to school by bicycle or dropped by other private vehicles. Unfortunately, this poor boy did not have any of these options. But he was always hoping that one day he able to ride the bicycle to his school. He started dreaming about that...

He really had hesitation to keep on telling his mother to buy a bicycle for him as he clearly knew that she is a single mom who struggles a lot to manage the house expenses and other liabilities incurred as part of his sister's marriage. His mother is a salesperson in a small shop, also doing house maid work in neighbor houses and hardly getting anything to manage their rent as well as day-to-day expense. She knew about his "bicycle dream" since he entered to the high school when they moved to this new area. Each time when he starts talking about the bicycle, she used to tell him that she needs some more money to buy a bicycle. Even though they had these financial hardships, the boy was very smart and became the top scorer in the new school. She wanted to buy the bicycle for him, that is the only one ask this boy made in his life to her.

After few months, he realized that it's not possible for his mother to afford it even though bicycle is available less than Rs.1500 (i.e., \$10-\$20), so he tried to forget about his bicycle dream and continue walking to the school on the muddy dirty road on rainy days.

Even though he had the struggling life, he was very well focused on his studies. His mother, teachers and their community were providing all the support what all they could afford. He got high score in the entrance exam and got into the College of Engineering Trivandrum (CET).

After joining the CET, the situation became more tougher he needs to find more money for the hostel fee, tuition fee, etc. He heard about the Swiggy delivery and started working as delivery boy in the evening time as well as weekends to find some money to manage his expenses.

Even though he is going through these hardships, he was not ready to give up his hope and goals. He is like a phoenix bird with sharp eyes and strong wings to overcome the challenges coming in his way. I told myself that "this boy is one of the rare Precious Gem and all his dreams will come true one day as the world never ever lose this rare Gem" after hearing his stories during the scholarship evaluation time.

"MEA scholarship polishes these Precious Gems to shine brighter"
Happy to share my experiencing during the scholarship evaluation time.

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