

MELBOURNE NEWS

In the direction of hope

Cancer, I did not give you the right to invade my body and take a bite.

This is my body and with all my might I will prevail with one hell of a fight.

To the cancer inside, I will battle and kill.

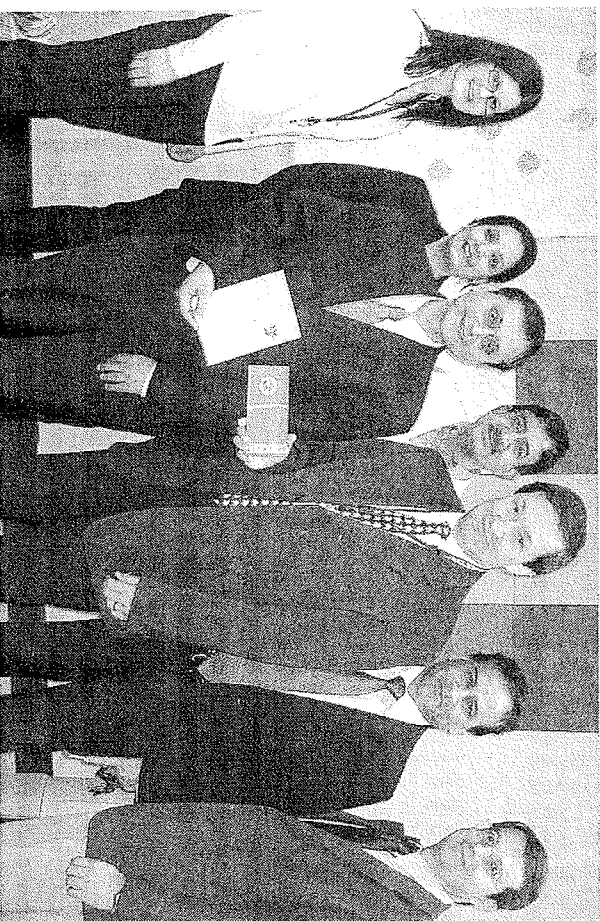
For this my body's god given will.

To my cancer, these words I do send. Your life is short and near the end.

THESE INSPIRING words portray triumph of the mind over the human body. Among the innumerable afflictions that mankind endures cancer inevitably tests the limits. The battle against this insidious and life changing illness can do with every bit of inspiration and a whole lot of effort. Efforts required not only from those affected but also from everyone who cares. Taking a step in that direction is Disha, an organisation that intends to raise awareness and do something worthwhile for the community.

Disha's inaugural function was held last month at Darling Street, South Yarra and the proceeds were earmarked for the Alfred Foundation and the Bone Marrow Transplant Unit at the Royal Melbourne Hospital. The event helped raise \$10,000 for each hospital. Disha's mission statement is to be a direction in hope by reaching out, touching and helping in healing. Tara Chandramouli Founder of Disha says, "Cherish every moment of Disha because it is our only chance in life of assisting God in a miracle".

Mr. Kevin Panozza CEO of Sales Force,



Disha team presenting a cheque to the Royal Melbourne Hospital's Bone Marrow Transplant unit. (from left to right): Mr Zahid Merchant, Dr Jeff Szer (Head of BMT unit) Back: Ms Laura Gibson (Royal Melbourne Hospital), Mrs Tara Chandramouli, Mr Ram Chandramouli, Mr Anil Dhir, and Dr Andrew Roberts

who was voted best employer two years in a row for 2004 and 2005 by the Hewitt Survey of Australian Beureau, inaugurated the event. Also present were Dr Helen Whitford specialist in respiratory Medicine from Alfred Foundation and Dr Andrew Roberts leading clinical and experimental Hematologist from Royal Melbourne Hospital. Dr Neelam Bhardwaj, renowned gynecologist, introduced the sequence of events with great aplomb. Her natural vivaciousness and tongue-in-cheek remarks kept the audience enthralled.

Disha was conceptualized when Tara's brother Bonny was diagnosed with lung cancer. It was a gut wrenching anguish for Tara's family but she knew that she needed to do something to give strength and courage to her brother to fight and win this challenge in life. She took stock of her strength, organised her opportunities and Disha was born.

Giving a brief background on Disha, Neelam said, "The translation of theory to reality was driven by Tara Chandramouli's energy. Out of a sister's love Disha was born."

The theme for the night was Bollywood, giving an opportunity to sparkle and sizzle in saris. Tables were named after Bollywood movies and the trivia for the night, tested people's knowledge of filmi sitare and zabardast hits. The Gowri School of Indian Dances presented a medley of Bollywood zhatkas followed by a Bollywood dance workshop that helped the audience pick up some Bollywood moves. DJ, Dhol and dinner were part of the fare, not necessarily in that order. Raffles and auctions augmented the fundraising figures along with sponsors and supporters. Disha intends to organise events on a regular basis to support various causes.

An event of this proportion involves effective teamwork and many people were responsible for its success however special mention was made of the efforts of Anil Dhir, Aarti Lakhani, Suman Kanodia, Jabeen Merchant and Tara Chandramouli who worked tirelessly. "We are hoping to go bigger and better with each effort and involve the mainstream community as much as possible. Plans are already underway for our next event major scheduled for March next year," informed Aarti Lakhani. With a great cause, good intentions and talented people Disha seems to be heading in the right direction.

Preeti Jabbal