



USLA Community Newsletter

Issue 20, November 2021



Mahes Hettige

Message from the President United Sri Lanka Association Inc. (USLA)

On behalf of the United Sri Lanka Association Inc, it gives me great pleasure to send a brief message to our members and friends highlighting what we collectively achieved this year, in this edition of Lakmina.

This year albeit with Covid-19 restrictions we hosted several functions such as the Sinhala & Tamil new year, Roti party and talent show, Knowledge for thought workshop and community fund raising activities. We saw record participation of young members of our community in our activities. We encouraged our members to participate in the sustainability initiatives re-greening of New Zealand by planting trees, which we had to put on hold due to covid restrictions. These events provided the forums our community and well-wishers to meet with each other, to reminisce their time in Sri Lanka, to re-live those special moments, and to strengthen their old ties.

One of the key aspects of my leadership was to see USLA grow in many ways noting the invaluable contributions made by past Presidents of this great organization. As president, I want to ensure we grow with our community and bring insights and thought that provoke discussion and awareness on topical matters. In our first talk series. We had four young ladies (including two granddaughters of our founder members) addressed us on diverse topics such as climate change, diabetes, mental health and wills and power of attorney. USLA can do more for diversity within our community not only to learn from others but get greater participation. We as a community have well learned community members, covering all disciplines, lets harness their talent.

This year we had renewed effort to grow our membership and I am grateful to past members who renewed their membership and continue to support us and, we welcome new members who joined us. We also supported by donating funds to worthy community activities.

Apart from a great contribution from the MC members, running USLA activities depend a lot on others who help us relentlessly to make the events run smoother. I am grateful to Sri Lanka Dance Academy for their continued support in our activities through dancing, drumming, and showcasing cultural activities and agreeing to support us again with the nativity

play this year too at our Christmas celebrations in November 2021. I am especially grateful to Anil de Silva for helping with choreographing aspects of the talent show and training our younger members to shine in their musical performances at this event. Also, like to thank the band members of Red Hot Lunumiris and their organising team: Pradeep Silva and Duminda Weerasundara who supported us with their great band performance throughout the night at the roti party.

USLA is extremely grateful to all our generous sponsors who have supported our programme and continue to do so. We were privileged and grateful to have had the resources of Mr. Jayantha Nanayakara & his colleagues who live streamed the Roti party and the Sinhala & Tamil New year function on Sri Lankans in NZ Facebook page enabling us to reach wider audiences to show case our activities.

I also thank all those who have helped us in 2021 behind the scenes, assisting with food preparation, setting up halls at events, transporting items back and forth from Lak Medura, those who man the ticket desks, participants, people who give us constructive feedback, and friends who support in various ways to help keep the Association running. Your freely given time and energies are very much appreciated. Your contribution helps to keep this fantastic Association in great condition.

Mahes Hettige

President/USLA

CELEBRATION OF THE SINHALA & TAMIL NEW YEAR



Sinhala and Tamil New Year is the biggest celebration in Sri Lanka. Generally known as Aluth Avurudda in Sri Lanka, it is a holiday that celebrates the traditional New Year of the Sinhala and Tamil people in Sri Lanka. It is usually celebrated on 13th or 14th April. Traditionally based on the sun's movement from the Meena Rashiya (House of Pisces) to the Mesha Rashiya (House of Aries). There are unique rituals and traditions that are performed during the Sinhala and Tamil new year.

You cannot speak about new year without talking about food!!!

USLA held a Kavali wadamuluwa (sweetmeat workshop) at Lak Medura on 17th April 2021 where more than 50 volunteers participated. This workshop was held to prepare traditional sweetmeats for the New Year celebration organised for the following day. This was a great opportunity to share the knowledge of preparing traditional Kavali.



Our sincere appreciation to all volunteers

at the Sweetmeat workshop 2021!!!



Sinhala and Tamil New Year celebration was held on 18th April 2021 at St Patrick's College Hall in Kilbirmie.

Wellington Mayor Andy Foster and Mr. Greg O'Connor, MP participated as the chief guests at the occasion.

This year event was a huge success, with over 300 friends and families from our community attending.

Many community members wore the customary 'Avurudu' attire 'redda hetta' (cloth and jacket), sarong. Rituals for prosperity and good luck were performed, such as the lighting of the oil lamp and the boiling of milk in a pot until it overflows. The 'Avurudu' table was stacked with Kiribath (milk rice), sweetmeat and other special dishes, enjoyed by all those who attended.

The Sri Lankan Dance Academy entertained the audience with beautiful cultural performances.

The highlight of the celebration was the traditional games for both children and adults. Some of the games played were 'Placing the eye on the elephant' (Aliyata asa thabeema), 'Tug-o-War' (Kamba Adeema), 'Eating buns' (Banis kema), 'Pillow-fight' (Kotta Pora), 'Feeding curd' (Kirikawima), and 'Breaking the pots' (Kanamutti bindeema).

It was a successful event that gave a glimpse into traditional Sri Lankan practices, ethnic performances, and authentic Sri Lankan delicacies.

A link for the video of events is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1IKjqGQPGw>



RANAVIRU COMMEMORATION 2021



Following three decades of ferocious Civil war in Sri Lanka, the government announced an end to it on 18th May 2009.

This year is the 12th Anniversary marking the end of the terrorism. As we have done for the past 11 years, this year USLA management committee organized a Commemoration Ceremony in memory of our war heroes, who selflessly contributed to the success story and liberated the country from terrorism.

The Commemoration Ceremony was held on 19 May 2021, at Lak Medura with more than 30 participants.

Two-minutes of silence was observed, and a candle was lit in honour of our war heroes who made the supreme sacrifice giving their lives for the country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and independence.

A virtual speech was given by Colonel Dilantha Fernando from Sri Lanka for this occasion.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Sri Lanka, schools started to conduct online classes. It was brought to our attention that some children of our war heroes are in need for tablet devices.

We requested that our community contribute to our Ranaviru Fund. Due to the generosity of our community, we were able to collect funds for 24 tablet devices. We purchased the tablets from Abans and have delivered them to Sri Lankan Army Headquarters. The presentation of the 24 tablets to deserving children of our disabled soldiers will be on 27 November 2021. We hope to post photographs of the presentation on our Facebook page, website, and our next issue of Lakmina. Our heartfelt thanks to all those who contributed towards the tablet devices.



SRI LANKAN FOOD FESTIVAL TO RAISE FUNDS FOR USLA COOMUNITY ACTIVITIES



A Delicious Way!!

Each year, USLA management committee organises various activities to raise funds for community work that we do.

This year, on 13th of June we organised a night food bazaar at the Tawa Community Centre. Lot of people from our community volunteered to prepare food for the fundraiser. It was a huge success and lots of people from different ethnic groups took a part of this event.

It was a great night where everyone enjoyed delicious food in a fun atmosphere.

HELPING OUR COMMUNITY

Our association quietly and continually offers needed assistance for members and their families when misfortune strikes.

USLA has established a fund to facilitate members and well-wishes to contribute to help our Sri Lankan community facing hardship during the COVID-19 pandemic. Continuous support is available for individuals, families, employers, and self-employed people in our community affected by COVID-19, through our Covid-19 Fund.

We have a considerable amount of equipment that we use for community activities. These assets are borrowed from time to time by community members for various events such as parties, dana, and funerals.

We lend our Lak Medura to Sri Lankan Dance Academy for their dancing and drumming practices, and other organisations/individuals when there is a need by them.

Most people who borrow assets, give a small donation for the society work which we appreciate a lot.

Your support is key to helping the community and you are most welcome to make a contribution to the USLA. If you do wish to contribute, please contact us via admin@usla.org.nz

We've got your back!!

KNOWLEDGE FOR THOUGHT SERIES

Our July speakers



Dushanka Hettige
Topic:
Delving into Diabetes & Nutrition



Saama Dias
Topic:
Wills & Enduring Power of Attorney

The Knowledge for Thought series started in July 2021, in keeping with our vision of 'Growing with our community'. We are offering series of talks that cover topics perceived to be of interest and value to our community.

Our first session was held at Newlands Community Centre on 11th July and four speakers from our community covered various topics. Our first session was a great success with more than 50 attendees.

We will be continuing with our Knowledge for Thought sessions every three months. We are open to your feedback and if you are interested in presenting in one of these sessions please register with us at admin@usla.org.nz

Our July speakers



Nimesha Tissera
Topic:
Mental Health and Good Therapy



Nimithara Udawatta
Topic:
Climate Change



ROTI PARTY/VARIETY SHOW



USLA hosted our most popular Roti Party/Variety Show on August 7th at St. Patrick's College Hall in Silverstream.

The programme showcased items from children, youth and adults in our community.

All those who participated displayed their talents and their commitment for music and performance to keep our culture alive. This event was a great success with more than 250 attendees.

The attendees were entertained by our exciting youth band 'Red, Hot Lunumiris and the Roti meal was a huge hit and enjoyed by everyone...

Our sincere appreciation to everyone in the community who contributed to this event in various ways !!



PUBLIC ADVOCACY



USLA president Mahesh Hettige with Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Minister for Diversity, Inclusion & Ethnic Communities. At launching of Ministry of Ethnic Communities on the 1st July 2021

Affiliation of our community with politicians and key officials is important to our future success. We will also keep promoting political engagement and expanding the existing dialogue with government officials.

A new Ministry for Ethnic Communities was launched in the New Zealand parliament premise on 1st July 2021. The Government has launched this ministry for improving the inclusion and outcomes for different ethnic groups.

Mahes Hettige, USLA president was our representative for this event, which was attended by more than a hundred members and representatives of various other community groups. This was a good forum for USLA to engage and network with different community groups and government officials.

Terrorist Attack in Auckland

USLA condemned in the strongest terms this deplorable terrorist attack which took place in Auckland on 3rd September 2020. USLA received message of thanks from our New Zealand Prime minister and MP regarding USLA statement and comments related to terror attack.

USLA GROWING WITH OUR COMMUNITY

Upcoming events:

Annual Christmas Party
27th November

Sports Day
23rd January 2022

Annual Cultural show and
Dinner Dance
12th February 2022

USLA COMMITTEE 2021/2022

United against its 38th Annual General Meeting was held at Lak Medura on 27th March 2020. Thirteen committee members were elected for the period of March 2021 to March 2022.

Mahes Hettige – President
Kusal Udawatta – Vice President
Yashodha Jayawardhana – Secretary
Rasika Jayabandu – Assistant Secretary
Ranjith Nanayakkara – Treasurer
Shanika Tennakoon – Editor

Hemantha Madurapperuma – Committee Member
Channa Ranasinghe – Committee Member
Navindra Herath – Committee Member
Manori Hettiarachchi – Committee Member
Dhananjaya Chandrasekara – Committee Member
Nuwani Amaratunge – Committee Member
Nirmal Perera – Committee Member

Suresh Senadeera- Auditor
Dr Chula Rajapakse - Spokesperson

Our USLA Team 2021/2022

We are looking forward to serving you!!

HAVE YOUR SAY

Reaching our goals require your support:

To renew your current membership, or to become a new valuable member of our Association, pay your membership fee and email the receipt with your contact details to admin@usla.org.nz

Bank account details:

The annual membership fee: NZD \$25.00

Account name:USLA

Account Number: 01-0517-0292026-00

Reference: Membership



We are open for your feedback!!

Connect with us via

USLA website: <https://usla.org.nz/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UnitedSriLankaAssociationInc/>

Email to: admin@usla.org.nz