

AERG Sponsors Program About Culture of India

On August 9th, Lifespan's Asian Employee Resource Group and the Lifespan Office of Community Relations sponsored an event at the Rhode Island Hospital cafeteria to commemorate India's Independence Day (August 15, 1947).

Shanti Muthu, a yogic health educator from Pawtucket, gave a brief talk about the cultural differences in health care between India and the United States. For example, because the concepts of karma and rebirth are integral to Indian philosophy, some patients may forego life-prolonging treatment, preferring to let their body in this life go if it no longer supports their dreams and goals. Physicians in India routinely suggest modifications to their patients' diet, because different food properties are closely tied to physical and spiritual well-being. Women may wear ceremonial jewelry, and men sometimes don special threads across their body. The sensitive provider should ask permission before removing these items.

Shanthi also demonstrated classical Indian dance movements (called Bharatanatyam), along with a folk art form (rangavalli), and differ-



Shanti Muthu demonstrates the folk art of rangavalli.

ent methods of sari-wrapping.

Bharatanatyam utilizes yoga-type postures that promote strength, flexibility and well-being. Each dance also tells a story.

Rangavalli is the art of using rice flour to make complex geometric patterns. Typically created by women, these works of beauty and precision can cover thousands of square feet, and may be displayed in front of a home to convey the skill and desirability of the young woman who lives there. Ms. Muthu encouraged participants to make their own patterns — whereupon they discovered that it was signifi-

cantly harder to do than it looked!

To the delight of several female Lifespan employees, Ms. Muthu demonstrated how to don a sari. Participants learned that there are numerous traditional sari wrapping techniques that vary by region, though they all utilize a strip of unstitched cloth, ranging from four to nine yards in length.

Daniel Van Etten, Chef, RIH, created a special menu of Indian dishes with help from Production Supervisor Eric Geisman. Sauces and appetizers were provided by



Performing a classical Indian dance.

Monsoon Kitchen. Ninni Jacob, RIH Radiation Safety Officer, organized the day's events. ■



Displaying their sari-wrapping accomplishments are (left to right) Ratsamy "Mimi" Keointhisone, Nurse, RIH, and Co-Chair of Lifespan's Asian ERG; Martha Aktchian, Manager of Interpreter Services and Information Desks, RIH; Raysa Marte, Hemophilia Practice Manager, RIH; and Judy Kaye, Diversity/EEO Coordinator.