

Chinmaya Yuvakendra West (CHYK-West)
By: Ramya Radhakrishnan (CHYK-LA Secretary)

Who Are We?

CHYK stands for *Chinmaya Yuvakendra* and its members represent the youth wing of the Chinmaya Mission organization from all over the world. CHYK-West is comprised of CHYK groups from all across the North American continent and is comprised of university students and young professionals dedicated to the pursuit of self-study and self-growth. It helps youth from the ages of 18 – 30 to develop a sense of unity and purpose while realizing their true potential.



Picture: Our first CHYK Hiking Trip to Switzer Falls with Swami Ishwarananda in May 2005

(Left to right: Siva Bharadvaj, Tapasya Desai, Aditi Mehta, Swami Ishwarananda, Ramya Radhakrishnan, Sunil Goklani)

CHYK-West strives to unite young adults by providing a forum to explore, discuss, and practice Vedanta while strengthening their lives in every endeavor. We aim:

- For personality unfoldment, through enlightenment of the intellect and enrichment of character.
- For a systematic and deliberate preparation, to enable youth to face the challenges and realities of life with a smile.
- To cultivate qualities necessary to win the game of life, such as clarity of vision, team spirit, capacity to rise above ones weaknesses, equipoise and creativity.
- To develop new habits, trends, goals and ways of living.
- To achieve a TRUE EDUCATION - A spirit of enquiry into the principles of life in the light of our Ancient Philosophy.

CHYK-West Kick-Off Conference 2005 – Chicago, IL

At the end of March 2005, I was fortunate enough to attend a weekend conference in Chicago's CM center – Badri. This was not only a planning meeting, but was also the official launch of CHYK-West in North America. The weekend consisted of several discussion sessions and meetings deliberating the structure, communication, activities and immediate plan of action for our new umbrella organization. I was also fortunate enough to meet many other enthusiastic

participants from all over the continent. On the last day of the conference and after many hours of hard work, our plan was finally established. It was also at this time that Swami Ishwarananda appointed some of us to be local chapter Secretaries for our home cities. I was given the privilege of serving as the CHYK-LA Chapter secretary and for the past 10 months now, I have been trying my best to increase the participation level among our local youth in Los Angeles and the greater Southern California area.

The passion and conviction that I saw among many of my fellow CHYKs during this conference (most of whom are now also secretaries of their respective cities) was more than I had ever seen in my 15 years with Chinmaya Mission. This was my inspiration to make CHYK-LA as devoted and motivated as its sister groups around the continent.

After a very productive and rewarding session in snowy/slushy Chicago (yes, it was still snowing at the end of March!), I am proud to say that we now have a living, working, breathing organization that we are all responsible for maintaining. I hope that CHYK-LA will move its way up to becoming one of the few CHYK groups with the largest membership in the country.



Picture: CHYK-West 1st National Conference – Chicago, Badri (March 25 – 27, 2005)

What Have We Been Up To?

From its inception on January 1, 2005, CHYK-LA has been growing in its number of members as well as in the number of activities that have been brought to fruition in the past year. These have ranged from study groups to self-improvement workshops to volunteer work and even a hiking trip with Swami Ishwarananda which took place last May. The following is a summary of some of our more recent events, written by a handful of CHYK-LA's most active participants:

Food For Thought: “Stress in College and the Workplace” – by Sunil Goklani

On Saturday, September 3rd, 2005 CHYK-LA hosted its largest event to date, *Food for Thought: Stress in College and the Workplace* at the Mithila center. This was the first event in the newly created/named “Food For Thought” series which will consist of lectures/discussions/social events accompanied by a dinner or lunch social. There was a diverse group of attendees ranging from upper classmen in high school to young professionals who have been in the working world for a few years. Swami Ishwarananda kicked off the event by providing us with several words of wisdom on different types of stress (yes there is good stress in addition to bad stress!). He also touched on the causes and effects of stress, as well as on how to deal with it. After the lecture,

we formed small discussion groups amongst ourselves to talk about possible strategies in preventing and dealing with stress. Topics ranged from forming daily un-stressful routines to dealing with family, friends, coworkers and bosses. Now that "Thought" had taken place, it was time for the second part of our Food for Thought lecture, - the food! We concluded our first - and very successful, Food for Thought event by having a very yummy potluck! We hope to make this series recurrent in the future.

Thanksgiving Celebration – by Swetha Bharadvaj

This was the 2nd event in our “Food For Thought” series! What better way to celebrate Thanksgiving than sharing some unique, seasonal, vegetarian dishes? CHYK held its first annual Thanksgiving event at the KASI center the Saturday night after Thanksgiving. CHYK members designed the tasty 5 course meal (including Stuffed Pumpkin Pasta, Candied Sweet Potatoes, and Mushroom Salad just to name a few) on their own. With only the aid of 7 CHYKs in the kitchen, a fabulous meal was created (with a little store-bought ice cream for dessert, of course)! While the food nourished our bodies, the thought provoking movie, “*What the Bleep Do We Know?*” nourished our minds. We ended the evening by watching the movie and making the unique connection between the spiritual and the scientific.



Picture: Preparing dinner in KASI for our Thanksgiving Celebration – November 2005
(Left to right: Kunal Patel, Swetha Bharadvaj, Stuti Desai and Ramya Radhakrishnan)

2006 Rose Parade Float Decorating! – by Tapasya Desai

25 youth members of CMLA were fortunate enough to end 2005 with a unique opportunity to use their artistic talents to contribute to the 117th annual Rose Parade - a tradition that has grown immensely and is telecasted on New Year's Day. On Thursday, December 29th, Br. Girishji accompanied 25 youth to help decorate the Cal Poly Rose Parade 2006 float entry entitled "Enchanted Reverie" in Pasadena. The Rose Parade floats are unique in that they are only allowed to be covered and colored with natural materials-flowers, bark, seeds, and vegetables for example. Adults and children over the age of 16 were allowed to work on the high scaffolds gluing broccoli to the dragon to make a green border pattern. Others were given tasks like preparing flowers, applying bark to the tree, and painting fairies. Girishji made two of the wings on a fairy all on his own by gluing thin flower petals in careful rows. On New Year's Day, many

volunteers who had never watched the parade before turned on their televisions to see the float they helped with and proudly claimed, "I helped with that!" This was no doubt, an exciting and fun way of performing community service while also broadening our imaginations.



Picture: Soon-to-be LA CHYKs at the float decorating event – December 29, 2005
(Left to right: Hyma Kavuri, Venkat Kavuri, Veena Senra and Madhavi Venkatesh)

CHYK LA Weekly Study Groups – by Chitra Balasubramanian

"Enjoy the world, but let not the world enjoy you. Eat food, but let not the food eat you. Drink, but let not drink drink you." - Swami Chinmayananda

Over the past several months, CHYK members have come together on Thursday nights at 8pm at the KASI center to explore topics for self-enrichment such as Brahmacharya, or self-control, as described by the quote from Swamiji above. These weekly meetings have served as an informal forum for CHYK members to contemplate and discuss the topics covered in Self-Unfoldment, a text containing the writings and talks of Swami Chinmayananda. Discussions have ranged from topics such as BMI, or Body, Mind, Intellect, to happiness, and have been greatly thought-provoking. The CHYK group has also been fortunate to have Bala Uncle as the moderator for many of the weekly sessions and is excited to continue the weekly study groups through 2006. The study group is open to all youth who are interested in learning more about Vedanta and its practical guidance for living. Due to the structure of the text, the chapters stand alone, making it easy to participate in the weekly study groups without previous weeks' attendance. Please feel free to walk into our study groups anytime if you are interested!

How Can You Join?

If you are interested in joining the Los Angeles Chapter of CHYK West and are between the ages of 18 – 30 (or know someone who is), please send an e-mail to chykla@gmail.com with your name, age and a request to be added on our mailing list. You will receive weekly notifications of events that will be coming up in the near future. If you have specific questions, please feel free to e-mail Ramya Radhakrishnan at luvxander@comcast.net or our advisor, Bala Bharadvaj at balabharadvaj@yahoo.com. We hope to welcome many more new and enthusiastic members in 2006! ☺