

University Women

Monthly Newsletter of Women Graduates Union



University Women
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PRESIDENT'S NOTE



Bina Thadani

Dear Members and WGU friends,

March is a beautiful season in India. Spring sets in with a mild breeze, and the colors and glories of

nature. So many Indian festivals like Basant, Holi, Navroze, Chapchar the Mizo spring festival, also magnify the festivity of the season. We too at Women Graduates Union recently organized a grand celebration of the International Women's Day and month, joining hands with Maharashtra United Nations Association. Read all about it in this newsletter of WGU. Big events are never easy to put together and my sincere thanks go out to the joint efforts of several of WGU's committee members and other willing WGU members, who helped make this one a huge success.

The discussion on women's status has assumed urgency. Enormous changes in our society have accelerated the ongoing battle of women towards true equality. Life spans have increased and no longer is it required for women to devote the greater part of their lives to child rearing; Today's technology has reduced most of the chores which women earlier performed in the home. Physical muscle, as a requirement for many jobs, has been made virtually irrelevant thanks to technology, while intensifying Indian and global businesses' need for creative intelligence and innovation. Now, women in this 21st century, can and must participate in higher education and today's new fields of work and enterprise, in fully equal measure as their male counterparts.

Join us for more exchanges of views, we welcome new members, let's together make WGU help advance the role of women with a strong voice. Our members receive this Newsletter through e-mail as well as in the post so do update your addresses. ■

A Gala Fundraiser Event



'Chief Guest Yezdi Desai addressing the gathering. (l to r) Arnavaz Havewala, Anahita Desai, Havovi Gandhi and Bina Thadani.'

The Women Graduates Union held its Annual Fund Raising Program 2019 at the Garware Club, on February 16, 2019.

Dr. (Ms.) Arnavaz M. Havewala, Vice President and Chairperson, Program & Fund Raising Committee opened the evening's program, by welcoming everybody, followed by a welcome song by three girls from Apun Ka Club, an NGO at Shanti Van, Nepean Sea Road, to the audience of over seventy members and guests.

After this, she invited the Chief Guest, Yezdi Desai, the Guest of Honour, Anahita Desai, WGU President, Bina Thadani, and the Past President, Havovi Gandhi to the dais, and felicitations followed.

Mr. Desai spoke glowingly of the role of women in Society, and appreciated the work done by WGU in educating and empowering women.

A special Souvenir was released by the Chief Guest. Dr. Arnavaz thanked all those who had contributed by way of advertisements, donations and sponsorship, resulting in a good funds collection.

The Entertainment program began with Ganesh Vandana, a beautiful welcome dance, performed by Hera Havewala.

MERAKI, a well-known Band, which has performances at the Hard Rock Cafe and St. Regis Hotel to its credit, took the stage and rocked the hall with their foot-tapping



music. There were two more dance performances by Hera - a tribute to the Goddess Durga and a second one a tribute to Lord Shiva, a very powerful performance which the audience appreciated tremendously.

The evening ended with a sumptuous dinner catered by Gymkhana 91.

All in all, everyone enjoyed the entertainment and the excellent food. ■

PRIZE TIME AT THE BALWADI

The Prize Distribution Function of the Balwadi was held during this quarter. Generous Donor and well wisher Mr. Cawas Lalkaka and his family members of the Lalkaka Trust especially attended the function. Chairperson of the Balwadi, Havovi Gandhi gave a warm welcome and expressed appreciation for donations and prizes. Five of the prizes were donated by Member Usha Bhandarkar and WGU gave away an additional five to the children who received their prizes with pride.

Mr. Lalkaka graciously offered to fund and donate a monitor and speaker with a built-in amplifier for the Balwadi so that educative videos may be shown to the children from time to time.



The Balwadi room having been renovated now bears a bright new look, with fresh paint and attractive tiles in an aquatic theme lining the

walls. Further upgradation work is ongoing.

The Balwadi children are a happy lot.



Vidya Diwakar
The Meritorious Winner

Indian Ph.d. Scholar Vidya Diwakar Awarded The Prestigious Caroline Spurgeon Centenary Scholarship Of 12,000 Swiss Francs By Graduate Women International

12,000 Swiss Francs and received a number of applications. The unanimous choice was VIDYA DIWAKAR.

Vidya has lived most of her life abroad, in different countries. Right through school and college, she topped her studies and won scholarships for further studies. Growing up in different environments, Vidya was exposed at an early age to the concerns of a globalized world. She holds a BA in Economics, another BA in International Studies, an MPhil in Economics.

Presently Vidya is undertaking a part time PhD in Development Studies at the University of Cambridge. Her thesis is on the Safety of Women and Girls in Armed Conflict Zones, for which she will do field research in tribal areas of interior Orissa

which has Naxalite activities. She also works as a mixed-methods researcher in the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network at the Overseas Development Institute, London.

WGU wishes Vidya a wonderful career ahead! ■

Felicitations of Adv. Gauri Chhabria



Adv. Gauri Chhabria, Trustee and Chairperson, Counselling and Guidance Cell, WGU, was felicitated with the 'Bharat Ratna Dr. Ambedkar' Award 2018, presented to her for her outstanding contribution to society. WGU wishes her many more achievements.

WGU's International Associate body, GWI has awarded the Dr. Caroline Spurgeon scholarship to Kerala born Vidya Diwakar. Caroline Spurgeon was the first President of the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), later renamed Graduate Women International, when it first opened its office in 1920, in Geneva. She was one of the three women who signed the Human Rights Charter in 1919 in San Francisco. They together saw that the future lay in giving women the chance to empower themselves through higher education. In celebration of its Centenary Year GWI announced the prestigious Centenary Scholarship of

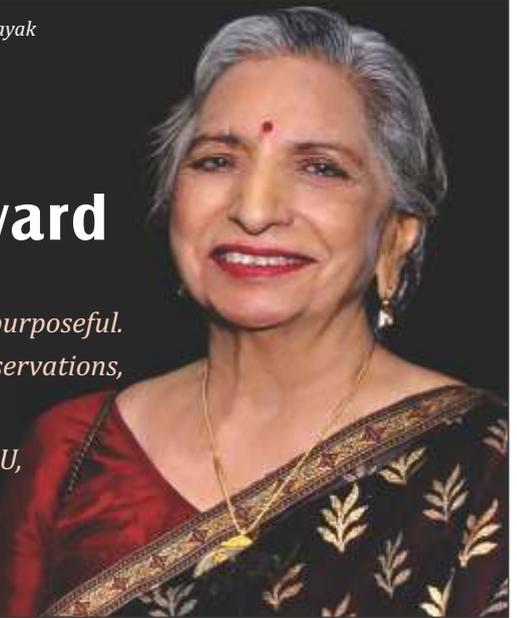
INTERVIEW

by Khorshed Nayak

Reminiscing with Swarn Kohli and The Way Forward

Swarn is a striking personality, always impeccably groomed, poised and purposeful. Animated in conversation, full of active ideas, sharp and candid in her observations, exuding graceful authority, prolific in her involvement with causes.

With over 50 years of active service and leadership in various roles with WGU, President from 1998 to 2000, Trustee for ten years and Mentor to many..... Swarn had much to say, in a pleasant conversation with Khorshed Nayak, Jt. Hon. Secretary.



When and how did your association with WGU begin?

I was introduced by some friends who were very active members of WGU. I joined in 1966 and initially served on the Scholarship Committee of which I became Chairman.

What a pleasant and very congenial work atmosphere existed in WGU then! We formed such close friendships that we still keep in touch even today!

Your name is instantly associated with consumer and civic causes. Did you have an icon or mentor?

No, I am entirely self-motivated as these causes are dear to my heart.

Around 1968, I had started a number of consumer organisations in Bombay and in the country. I strongly felt that WGU, being women-centric, should be concerned with consumer issues and I formed a Consumer & Civic Affairs Committee (CCAC) in WGU. It was very crucial to do so at that time, as consumers had no voice and it was purely a sellers market. For example in the rainy season, wet sugar was sold in newspaper, just imagine that! Shopkeepers refused to use plastic bags citing the small extra cost. We took it up as a consumer concern and worked long on this issue.

During my Chairmanship of the CCAC, the Packaged Commodities Act was finally passed. Due to that you now have packaging with all information printed on every package. A welcome step for consumers.

Another consumer concern was that domestic electrical appliances had no quality control, making it dangerous for users. With effort, the Domestic Appliance Order was passed, due to which the Indian Standards Institute (ISI) has to certify the product before the manufacturer can use the ISI mark.

The CCAC did good work and created a lot of awareness among WGU members of their consumer rights and of how they can tackle issues. We also arranged consumer education talks and workshops to create awareness of consumer rights for students and teachers and others. (Smilingly)—some young kids even did a project on panipuri hawkers and pointed out the unhygienic practices. You have to start with the young! CCAC was very active and successful in handling consumer complaints at the time.

We also actively took up civic area issues like sanitation, cleanliness, garbage, traffic, green areas, etcetra, with the concerned authorities and were quite successful.

I understand your husband Dr. F C Kohli inaugurated the Computer Centre in WGU.

Yes, I got the Computer Centre set up and started in 2001. The main purpose was to ensure that every woman is computer literate. That was my aim in getting it set up. Even today that has to be concentrated upon in running the Centre.

The way forward for WGU, what would be your suggestions?

When I joined WGU there was so much of togetherness and team spirit and congenial atmosphere, the cooperation and the passion to do and get things done. There is no other organisation like WGU and we have to take pride in that. I'd like to suggest a few things for WGU to think about and consider.

We used to have a grand annual Oration with erudite speakers such as Dr. Zakir Husain, chancellors, governors, judges and women and men of calibre. It was prestigious and can be revived.

Focus on the original aim of making all women computer literate through the Computer Centre.

I also feel it is important to take a relook at our building and use of space as requirements change.

In a city like Mumbai where the cream of people are found, there are women in high posts, heading corporates, institutions, public sector, judiciary, education sector and others. We must continue to engage with them and towards fund raising.

We have very senior members, over the age of 80, who are still active and sharp and can contribute to WGU. They have experience, inclination and the time. Use their expertise as advisors or in some capacity.

International Women's Day 2019 at WGU

An Evening To Remember.... With Women Of Substance



Chief Guest and Educationist, the elegant **Smita Godrej Crishna**, heads the Iconic Udayachal School in Vikhroli. In her keynote speech she stressed the vital need for a Sheconomy in which women must be involved in planning and designing public services, infrastructure, scientific research, to provide solutions for women to equally benefit from these.

The month of March is special for women all over the world and likewise for WGU. We were delighted to have marked the 2019 International Women's Day and month with a joyous celebration and an exciting, power packed programme attended by over a hundred people. The event was held in association with Maharashtra United Nations Association (MUNA) at WGU's grand Amy Rustomjee Hall.

WGU President Bina Thadani welcomed all present, while highlighting the importance of International Women's Day for WGU's Mission of promoting empowerment of girls and women through education. A. A. Syed, Secretary General, MUNA, addressed the audience. A message from the UN Secretary General,

Antonio Gueterres was read by Megha Patil, Member, Governing Council, MUNA. Chief Guest Smita Godrej Crishna then took the floor.

The boys and girls from the WGU Study Group enthralled the audience with two dances choreographed by Anisha Sakhare. One, a gentle graceful dance and then a spirited Maharashtrian Lavani, both highlighting female aspirations. The young talented boy Anugraha Chauhan sang his song Papa Kehte Hain with such aplomb and flair, that he got the audience clapping to the beat. It was heartening to see their youthful exuberance and eagerness to perform for the first time to a live audience and they handled it like little experts.



WGU and MUNA Team with Chief Guest, Panelists and Awardees.



Advocate **Kanchan Pamnani** encouraged women to boldly step out in society, educate themselves and work, even in the face of obstacles, such as her own disability of losing her eyesight at a young age.

The High-Powered Panel Discussion on the UN Theme 'Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate For Change'



Vinay Vasta (Founder-Director NGO, SAI) , Shubhika Bilkha (Partner EdpowerU), Niloufer Bhagwat (Advocate), Bharati Thakore (Moderator), Zahabiya Khorakiwala (Managing Director Wockhart Hospitals) Yasmin Saifullah (Managing Director Global Trade Links)

A thought-provoking panel discussion by the five esteemed panelists was moderated by Bharati Thakore, WGU member and CEO, New Millenium Education Partners. They debated important issues such as how more women can and should drive innovations, why such few women presently enter STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) related fields of study and professions and why very few start-ups by women get venture capital funding. Another dimension was women-centric legislation and its lack of proper implementation. The panelists exchanged their views and experiences on these issues at their workplaces. ■

THE GRAND FINALE... WGU 2019 INNOVATIVE WOMEN OF THE 21ST CENTURY AWARDS

The grand finale was the presentation of the Women Graduates Union 2019 Innovative Women of the 21st Century Awards to three iconic, highly successful innovative women, by the Chief Guest.

The Awardees' speeches on their own growth trajectory, their passion over-riding obstacles and challenges, their views on Women's capabilities and unlimited potential were amazingly inspiring.

The evening was rounded off with a vote of thanks by Dr. Chainani, Treasurer, MUNA. ■



Lina Ashar : Founder, Kangaroo Kids chain of Pre-Schools and Billabong High International Schools and Author.



Shaili Chopra : Founder, "SheThePeople" TV Online Channel, Business TV Journalist and Author



Know these dedicated women at the fore of WGU projects and activities

DOLLY SAGAR


B.A. (Hons.) Elphinstone College,
Bombay University

Chairperson, Scholarship
Committee

Actively involved in a number of WGU projects like Study Center, Counselling and Guidance. Held the post of Hon. Secretary 2015-1016, 2016-17. In the present role, responsible for inviting and awarding need cum merit based scholarships for higher education of girls.

SHIBANI CHAKRAVARTY


MSc, Delhi University.

Co-ordinating Trustee,
Chairperson, Study Centre
Committee

Worked in the NGO space Work before becoming actively involved in WGU more than 30 years ago. Held several posts earlier as Secretary, Counselling & Guidance Committee, WGU President, Vice President. Enjoys present work for the WGU Study Centre, to help underprivileged children with their school studies.

Prof. SABITA CHUGANEE


BSc. Pune University,
L.L.M. Mumbai University

Association Representative of
Indian Federation of Women's
Association (IFUWA)

Professor in Govt. Law College, Joint Hon. Secretary of IFUWA 2005-2008.

Actively involved in a number of projects in WGU. President of WGU 2000-2002, Ex-Trustee of WGU 2002-2017.

Adv. GAURI CHHABRIA


B.Com., LLB., Dharwad University,
Karnataka

Trustee. Chairperson, Counselling
and Guidance Committee,
Social Media

In- charge, creating posts and training WGU members to use social media to post about WGU.

WGU President 2012-14. Practising in Mumbai High Court since 3 decades, honorary lecturer at Government Law College for 11 years.

WOMEN WORKING FOR WOMEN



Dr. Laja Nagpal
Doctor

Dr Nagpal has been doing the bi annual checkups of our Balwadi and Study Centre children for the past 5 years. Her friendly and helpful manner puts the children, their parents and our staff at ease and they have all come to regard her as their Family Friend. She is making a difference in the lives of our children by opening the doors to good health and a bright future. Volunteers like Dr Nagpal are a great asset to any Organisation and WGU is happy she has chosen to share her time and talent with us.

Medicine with a heart, Dr Nagpal sponsors a cup of milk and Complian on every school-going day for Balwadi children.



Nidhi Srivastav
Design Consultant

Nidhi's dynamic personality is fueled by 'good vibes' and by her ability to produce great work under pressure. A 'visual storyteller' she dramatically improves design and execution to inspire people and energize brands. She feels very lucky to be helping and strengthening NGOs committed to progressive social change.

It is rare to find friends like Nidhi, especially one who you can call to meet tough deadlines, to spend sleepless nights and give up precious weekends to deliver the perfect job at the perfect time.

With a Degree in Architecture and a Masters in Design Communications Management from MICA, Ahmedabad, Nidhi has worked in the retail sector for 10 years. She is currently Design Consultant with several corporates and start ups.



Zarine Commissariat
English Teacher

At WGU Zarine teaches the Study Centre children conversational English. The children go to Marathi medium schools and are studying in classes, ranging from Std. II to Std. VIII. The kids really respond to her, and that's probably due to how exciting she makes the subject and how patient she is with them. "I am thrilled when I hear their speaking skills improving and their confidence growing with each session", says Zarine. "We love English class ...it's our favourite!" say the children.

Zarine has been All India President of IASAP (Indian Association of Secretaries & Administrative Professionals). She enjoys compering formal events and her most memorable one was when the Dalai Lama was the Chief Guest.

We need many more amazing women like these. Anyone interested in offering their knowledge, expertise and strength, please write in to wgu1915@gmail.com

SHEILA SHASTRI

BA (Hons.) Mumbai University
Co-ordinating Trustee, Chairperson,
Computer Centre Committee

Involved in promoting instructor-led training in basic use of computers, and practice by all ages at WGU. Earlier, WGU President, Vice-President, Scholarship, Programme and Fund Raising Committees. Involved in WGU projects and programmes. As Indian Federation of University Women's Association (IFUWA) Membership Convenor-2016-18.

Over four decades of work experience, 30 years as Executive Secretary to the Tata Group Chairman.

HAVOVI GANDHI

B.A., Jai Hind College
Chairperson, Byramji Lalkaka
Balwadi Committee

Actively involved in WGU, creating a pleasant play school and updating facilities of the Balwadi for toddlers from disadvantaged families.

Immediate Past President of WGU.

Work experience as Personal Secretary to Late Ajit Bhivandkar at Clearing & Forwarding Division of M/s. Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd.

NANDITA SINGH

B.A. (Hons.) Calcutta University,
B.T. Gauhati University

Trustee

Actively involved in WGU Activities in different capacities, earlier as Chairperson Consumer and Civic Affairs Committee, President of WGU 2014-16. Twenty five years experience in teaching in schools in Shillong, Calcutta, Bombay. Last job Headmistress, Bombay International School.

Prof. NEELIMA PATKAR

TMA, LLB, Dip. H.E., Dip. Journ.
Mumbai University

Chairperson, Hostel Committee

I was a Prof. in Communication skills in Sydenham College of Commerce & Economics, Mumbai.

I am currently the Chairperson of Purshotamdas Thakurdas Working Women's Hostel. Assisted by very competent team of colleagues and staff. I look after 109 residents in one Hostel. I am also involved in several WGU projects.



A Novel Gifting Idea Give A Gift Of WGU Membership

Thinking of a birthday or anniversary or occasion gift
For a sister, a daughter, a lady friend or neighbour or colleague?
Give a gift that gives in return.....gift a WGU membership!

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(includes additional membership of
IFUWA and of Graduate Women
International- GWI)

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Download a membership form

WGU website : www.womengraduatesunion.org

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I thought computers were for the young ones but when I started to email, google search friends, and Bill Pay !

Take your pick from these short courses for all ages, easy to learn from our dedicated coach - from the comfort of WGU's Computer Centre. What's more, kids too can have a fun time this summer practicing and learning from the especially designed Smart Kids Package.

MICROSOFT OFFICE PACKAGE

- Introduction To Computer
- MS Word 2013 • MS Excel 2013
- MS Powerpoint 2013
- Practice Session

Age – above 15 years • Duration – 60 Days



SMART KIDS COURSE

- Introduction to Computer • Paint
- Notepad • MS Word 2013
- MS Powerpoint 2013 • Practice Session

Age – above 15 years • Duration – 60 Days



WOMEN /SR. CITIZEN COURSE

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- Net Surfing • Email Account • Video Calls
- Smartphone Features • Google Maps
- Basic Trouble Shooting • Practice Session

Age – Any • Duration – 30 Days

INTERNET COURSE

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- Smartphone Features

Age – Any • Duration – 15 Days

Hurry and Register for your preferred course !

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Books

Becoming - A memoir

by Michelle Obama



The former first lady's long-awaited new memoir recounts with insight, candor and wit her family's trajectory from the Jim Crow South to Chicago's South Side and her

own improbable journey from there to the White House. *Becoming* is refined and forthright, gracefully written and at times laugh-out-loud funny. One of Obama's strengths is her ability to look back not from the high perch of celebrity or with the inevitability of hindsight but with the anxieties of the uncertain. One of the great gifts of Obama's book is her loving and frank bearing-witness to the lived experiences of the black working class, the invisible people who don't make the evening news and whom not enough of us choose to see. ■

Dare to lead

by Brene Brown



A new book by Brene Brown, a researcher and highly rated by those who are familiar with her Ted Talks, whose fans include Oprah Winfrey. In her #1 NYT

bestseller, now, based on new research conducted with leaders, change makers and culture shifters, she's showing us how to put those ideas into practice so we can step up and lead.

Leadership is not about titles, status and power over people. Leaders are people who hold themselves accountable for recognizing the potential in people and ideas, and developing that potential. This is a book for everyone who is ready to choose courage over comfort, make a difference and lead. ■

Contd... from Page 3

Reminiscing with Swarn Kohli
and *The Way Forward*



You must be a perfectionist by nature. Can you share your secret for your vitality, active involvement and drive even now.

Yes, I am a perfectionist. Once I take up something, then I want to and must see it through to the end, however long it may take. That's why I am often overworked.

For example, it took me 17 years of persistent effort to have the deteriorated Marine Drive promenade replanned and redone, as you see it today. It took me 8 years to get morchas terminating near Sachivalaya to be ordered to shift to Azad Maidan. A long 28 years to get an encroached green area freed for a garden. The present BPT Garden area was being reclaimed for office building use when we stepped in and later this became the beautiful Botanical Garden it is now.

You have been indefatigable to have made such milestone achievements when a lesser person would have given up.

What do you do for relaxation?

Oh, at one time I used to play the sitar. I regret not having kept it up.

After interacting with Swarn, a quotation comes to mind, "All success comes from tireless effort and pursuit, and all happiness comes from daily struggle and perseverance". ■

Save the Date

Thursday, April 4, 2019
at 11.30 a.m.

Talk on Heartfulness Meditation by
Dr. Lalita Dhareshwar followed by lunch

Members - ₹ 200/-
Guest - ₹ 250/-
Registration - ₹ 50/-

Last date for Registration - April 2, 2019
at WGU office on 22151947/22186220
or on email - wgu1915@gmail.com

Readers We'd Love To Hear From You

Express Yourself in Your Newsletter

Give us your feedback and comments on the Newsletter. Share with us your ideas and concerns on women's education and empowerment. Contribute to the Newsletter by way of viewpoints or how you tackled a civic or consumer or community problem.

Send us information (with source) or contact details which are useful to readers. Thought provoking quotations, even humorous ones are also welcome.

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