

First New Zealand Hindu Youth Conference

Source: <mailto:indu.nz@gmail.com>

AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND, May 2, 2009: The first New Zealand Hindu Youth Conference, "Living in Modern New Zealand with Traditional Values," was held May 2, 2009 in Mangere, Auckland. The conference was organized by the Hindu Youth Foundation, a division of the Hindu Council of New Zealand Inc, with enthusiastic support from the Hindu Elders Foundation.

Over 130 delegates, including six parliamentarians, participated in the conference. All were welcomed in the traditional Hindu way by placing a tilak on their forehead, and the conference started with lighting of the lamps by special guests. Maori elder Haare Williams blessed the conference with a Maori karakia (prayer and blessing) and Swami Vigyananand blessed the occasion with a Vedic prayer.

Speeches given by youth leaders Meena Lakshmanan, Nikita Sharma and Deepal Singh drew enthusiastic applause. Meena Lakshmanan pointed out that in terms of youth power "Hindu civilization is the youngest!" because 700 million Hindus are below the age of 35, 560 million are under 25, 350 million are under 19, and 250 million are under 14.

Workshops and youth meetings were held. In addition, the dynamic participants launched the New Zealand Hindu Students Forum, for university students

More Atheists Shout It From The Rooftops

Source: www.nytimes.com

CHARLESTON, SC, USA, April 27, 2009: More than ever, America's atheists are linking up and speaking out. They are connecting on the Internet, holding meet-ups in bars, advertising on billboards and buses, volunteering at food pantries and picking up roadside trash, earning atheist groups recognition on adopt-a-highway signs. Polls show that the ranks of atheists are growing. The American Religious Identification Survey, a major study released last month, found that those who claimed "no religion" were the only demographic group that grew in all 50 states in the last 18 years. Nationally, the "nones" in the population nearly doubled, to 15 percent in 2008 from 8 percent in 1990. At the University of South Carolina, in Columbia, 19 atheist students gathered in a group that uses humor to convey their opinion. They say that their goal is not confrontation, or even winning converts, but changing the public's stereotype of atheists. A favorite activity is to gather at a busy crossroads on campus with a sign offering "Free Hugs" from "Your Friendly Neighborhood Atheist."

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