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## CAMPUS NEWS

### Tsunami victims honored in vigil

By Alex Grubb

Arizona Daily Wildcat  
Thursday, January 20, 2005  
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More than 50 people went out to the UA Mall last night to attend a candlelight vigil to honor the victims of the tsunami in Southeast Asia and hear speakers from different religions.

The vigil was organized by the Association of Sri Lankans at the UA and featured speakers from various religious groups including Islamic, Buddhist, Presbyterian, Jewish and Bahai Faith. Representatives from each group offered their stories and insights on how they are dealing with the catastrophe and also to offer hope to the community.

Pinnaduwa Kulatilake, geotechnical engineering professor, opened the vigil with a scientific look at the mechanics of the tsunami and commented on the victims.

"These people need psycho-social assistance. Pray that people get assistance and have a strong mind to cope with this difficult situation," Kulatilake said.

Azad, director of the Islamic Center of Tucson, said Muslims greet each other with "peace be with you," and said, in a time like this, it is important to recognize how people treat each other and the state of the world.

"The element of good is more than the element of evil. Goodness is the rule, evil is the exception," Azad said.

Rev. Arjahn Sarayut of the Dhammaratanaram Buddhist Temple offered his own words of inspiration and encouragement.

"One thing to never forget, united people all over the world bring love, kindness, compassion and harmony," Sarayut said.

Sarayut sang a prayer with other monks from the temple and presented a thought for the audience.

"Thousands of candles can be lit from one candle," Sarayut said.

Jean McClelland, director of community-based health information resources at the College of



JACOB KONST/Arizona Daily Wildcat

Tucsonan Anne Burns bows her head in remembrance of those left dead, injured or homeless in the wake of Dec. 26 tsunami during last night's candlelight vigil held on the UA Mall. The event was a multi-faith memorial service setup through the efforts of the Sri Lankan Student Association.

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Public Health, was especially touched by Sarayut's words.

"The Buddhist monk's words were real human, more personal," McClelland said.

McClelland was impressed with the similarities and differences between the speakers, regardless of her or the speakers' religious views.

"It is interesting how the prayers were pan-religious and that there are so many different teachings and sayings, but they are all very similar," McClelland said.

Steve Ormsby, a political science senior, said he was also thankful for the opportunity to hear different voices.

"It's just nice to hear people talk about personal experiences, like the priest," Ormsby said. "It's amazing how in the blink of an eye everything changes. It makes us realize we're all human beings despite our differences," Ormsby said.

Jennifer Ellis, a journalism senior, said she looked at things differently after attending the vigil.

"It puts a new face on the situation, being able to see different religious perspectives. Sometimes we don't know how other people react," Ellis said.

Rachel Hughes, a science education liaison at the College of Pharmacy, was grateful for the chance to show her support by attending the vigil.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to show support for the (Sri Lankan) community," Hughes said. "Even if you're not religious, it was nice to take a moment to think a little."

Amila Wigerathne, a junior at Catalina Foothills High School, said he heard about the vigil from friends in ASLUA. He said he was interested in attending because one of his friends was visiting Sri Lanka when the tsunami hit and she passed away, he said.

"I'm happy they did it. It helps to cope with the disaster," Wigerathne said.

Samanthi Hewakapuge, an outreach information specialist at the Center for Toxicology, offered some insight into organizing the vigil, even though it is not something commonly practiced by Sri Lankans.

"Sri Lankans don't have candle vigils, but we did it to cater to the American and Tucson community. We did research about how to do one," Hewakapuge said.

ASLUA also accepted donations at the vigil for the relief efforts.

"World Care did a hell of a good job," said Thusitha Paluwatte, a second-year chemistry graduate student who was on the organizing committee.

"A doctor from UMC even went to Sri Lanka to help," Paluwatte said.

Paluwatte said support from the community has not stopped coming and everything is going to World Care, UNICEF or Americare.

McClelland hopes there will be updates on campus and opportunities to get involved in the relief effort.

"This was one gesture, but there is so much over time that we need to do," McClelland said.

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