

Friday

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Classifieds	12
Comics	11
Editorial	5
Lifestyle	7
Sports	16
Weather	2

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SERVING THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY SINCE 1903

Weekly luncheons focus on campus unity

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Staff Writer

For anyone looking for a free meal and a chance to meet people from around the world, T.E. Koshy, a chaplain at Hendricks Chapel, has just the event.

Since 1965, Koshy has been scheduling free luncheons aimed at attracting international students and other members of the Syracuse University community.

The purpose of these "friendship luncheons," Koshy said, is to promote diversity and understanding.

"These lunches provide an excellent opportunity for us to develop friendships and bridge a relationship among peoples of the world," Koshy said.

At noon Thursdays in the Noble Room of Hendricks, volunteers are on hand to serve a variety of food, which Koshy personally pays

for. The luncheons are open to anyone who wishes to attend.

"I don't think that there is such an opportunity on campus where international students and other people can come together in a homey atmosphere, meet one another and enjoy a meal," Koshy said.

He added that the average attendance is about 200.

Each luncheon features a guest speaker, usually a faculty member or administrator.

Thursday's guest, Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw, spoke about the benefits of Koshy's luncheons and diversity at SU.

"The university benefits greatly by being a diverse community," Shaw said. "Even if we don't always take advantage of its advantages, it's there."

"This is one of those occasions where we can take advantage of it, and that is good."

Shaw said the benefits of a diverse community include a sense of heterogeneity.

"The benefit (of diversity) is that we no longer live in a very small world where everyone like ourselves exists. But, rather, it's a whole world that is ours," Shaw said.

"If we grow up in an environment or try to learn in an environment that is very homogeneous, we put ourselves in a distinct disadvantage because that's not the way the world is."

Koshy began hosting the lunches in 1965 while a graduate student at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications.

A native of India, Koshy said he and other international students felt alienated from the main student body.

"I was very lonely as a student. In the 1960s, campuses were in tur-

See **HENDRICKS** page 3



MATT KLICKER/The Daily Orange
Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw speaks about the strengths of diversity to a gathering at an international luncheon. The luncheon takes place weekly in the Noble Room of Hendricks Chapel.

HENDRICKS

continued from page 1

moil. Many international students, including myself, felt that we were caught in the cross fire of this cultural revolution," Koshy said.

"I felt that voice, which I believe was God's voice, speaking to me saying, 'Why don't you do something?'" he said.

Koshy said his love of people motivated him to start the luncheons.

Koshy's first luncheon was in his apartment. He continued to host lunches until graduating in

the early 1970s. After a short career in journalism, Koshy returned to SU in 1972 and became a chaplain at Hendricks.

Koshy moved the luncheons to Hendricks in 1986 after they grew too large for his house.

Students and staff who have attended praised the luncheons.

"It's a real opportunity. From the animation of the conversations, (the people there) seem to really be enjoying themselves," Shaw said.

"It is a good time to make friends and connections. I like the people a lot," said Yoonhee Kim, a graduate student in computer in-

formation science.

Jim McCullough, a staff worker with the Graduate Christian Fellowship, said, "It's a good chance for international students whose native language isn't English to practice conventional English."

"Conversely, it is a chance for American students to stretch their world view."

Koshy said the luncheons serve to break down the barriers of prejudice and misconceptions.

"We can enrich and enhance our lives and build a beautiful community that we can be proud of both here and around the world."