

https://www.highlandnews.net/community/life/california-native-american-day-celebration/article_60740656-66bd-11e5-a259-1b7066c7b750.html

FEATURED

TOP STORY

California Native American Day Celebration

By Subia Jhori Special to Highland Community News
Sep 29, 2015



Former San Manuel Tribal Chairman James Ramos, now chairman of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors, joins bird singers at the conclusion of the Cultural Awareness Conference.

Photo by Suba Jhori

Last week's California Indian Cultural Awareness Conference culminated with the California Native American Day Celebration on Sept. 25 at Cal State San Bernardino. The week of conferences were designed to educate teachers and students on the culture and heritage of the Native American people of California. The event attracted students from many **school** districts as far as Los Angeles County.

Native American Day evolved from being celebrated only on the reservations to becoming a state holiday through the efforts of San Bernardino county Third District Supervisor and San Manuel Tribal Unity and Cultural Awareness Program Director James Ramos. Ramos started a piece of legislation that he lobbied through the assembly and the senate which was signed by Gov. Pete Wilson. It recognized California Native American Day, an official state holiday.

The week-long education leading to the day of celebration introduced the community to the traditions and practices that distinguished the California Native Americans from others around the country. A few of the common misconceptions are that drums are used in their **music** and that they hunted buffalo. However, gourds are their percussion instrument and San Bernardino and Highland Native Americans hunted Big Horn sheep and not the buffalo at all, which were not a part of the environment.

“The willingness and openness of the San Bernardino City **schools** and Cal State San Bernardino to reevaluate history and expand on knowledge clarifies many myths and preserves the culture,” Ramos said. He spoke warmly of the community embracing diversity. Ramos is also fond of Cal State San Bernardino’s Native American language courses for foreign language credit.

The festivities focused on **music**, dance and **food** from throughout California. The rhythmic Native American Bird Song echoed through the campus of Cal State San Bernardino and the scent of Indian fry bread filled the air. Performances included Me-Wuk and Yurok dances and songs. Carlos Geisdorff of the Me-Wuk tribe of Central California said his tribe’s credo in his Native language translated, “Our people are living.”

https://www.highlandnews.net/community/classical-ballet-training-in-highland/article_98ab3df8-059e-11e5-8026-cb45efd668c6.html

Classical ballet training in Highland

By Subia Johri Special to Highland Community News

May 28, 2015



Dance instructor Evette DeMarco Swinson guides her students through dance exercises at Inland Dance Academy which is celebrating its 15 year anniversary.

Photo by Subia Johri

Evette DeMarco Swinson owner of Inland Dance Academy repeats, “plea, rond de jambe, now double entendre” to her skillful students as she weaves between them in rhythm to Black Swan inspired by Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake.

This month's instruction is even more "en pointe" as it marks the 15th anniversary of Swinson's ownership of her dance **school** on Highland Avenue. The **school** instructs its students in various forms of dance including jazz, ballet and contemporary with special focus on classical ballet.

Swinson herself became a student of ballet at age nine and turned her passion for dance into a lifelong career with 30 years of teaching experience. Swinson has locally earned the title, master of teaching classical ballet in the Inland Empire.

In spite of its Highland location, students from across the Inland Empire take classes at Inland Dance Academy.

"I drive from Fontana to have my daughter attend here because Evette is an incredibly talented teacher," Stacey Lewis spoke warmly of Swinson.

Inland Dance Academy students recently celebrated a major win at the Star Systems competition in Riverside and took **home** the Platinum award and first place overall for "Kami No Rei" (spirit of the divine) choreographed by Swinson herself. Two contemporary pieces named "Perfect" and "Carousel" choreographed by Giselle DeMarco (Sugar plum fairy 2013) received elite high gold awards. Likewise, the students also take pride in performing in the Nutcracker at the California Theatre and plan to do so again this December for its 40th year.

Swinson has lovingly trained students who will soon be studying at the School of American Ballet in New York and the Rock School for Dance in Philadelphia. Swinson hopes to help each student reach their goal whether they want to join ballet for fun, fitness or future in professional ballet. “I hope to pursue dance in college as well. It really takes a lot of determination but I like the challenge and this studio is like a second **home** to me,” Christina Lipsett, a Highland high **school** senior. She has been learning under Swinson’s guidance since she was three and is off to Cal State Fullerton in the fall.

Christina hopes to be back to participate in the school’s **performances** such as the Coppelia **performance** at The Palace of Fine Arts in Jurupa this August. Auditions for the second act of Coppelia will be held at 4 p.m. on June 13 at the Inland Dance Academy for ages four to 11.

Now that Swinson has successfully reached 15 years of business experience she advises new entrepreneurs to make sure they have a good team behind them to **see** each student or client through. While Swinson shares that she understands the need for recreational dance studios, the edge that her business has over the others is in the classical training she is providing her students.

“We have fun here and we also learn good and solid technique along with how to be disciplined and ballet even helps students persevere outside of the studio,” Swinson said.

While Swinson would like to consider moving her studio to a more desirable area of Highland she knows her excellent reputation will bring her enthusiastic new students regardless of location. She hopes to continue to grow with her community this year.

“I want to transfer what I know to my students and want them to experience what it felt like to dance as a kid,” Swinson said as she was moved to tears by her passion for teaching ballet at the Inland Dance Academy.

https://www.highlandnews.net/community/haydin-hoping-for-a-third-birthday/article_aee50f9c-0fdd-11e5-9672-2baec4c1dd75.html

Haydin hoping for a third birthday

By Subia Johri Special to Highland Community News
Jun 10, 2015



Courtesy photo

Birthdays are a celebration marked with balloons, cake and presents from loving family and friends. Betty Ann Patterson, Highland grandmother is hoping to celebrate her great-granddaughter Haydin Jones' third **birthday** this June 22.

Haydin, who suffers from metachromatic leukodystrophy, (MLD), a rare and incurable disease, was diagnosed at two years old. Patterson wants to take time on her great-granddaughter's **birthday** to give thanks for Haydin's life again this year. Children diagnosed with late infantile MLD typically live five to 10 years.

MLD is a rare disorder affecting only one in 40,000 to 160,000 people worldwide. The condition occurs when an enzyme known as arylsulfatase (ARSA) does not exist in the body. ARSA breaks down sulfites; specific fats in the body and without ARSA, sulfatides build up in the nervous system and begin destroying the brain and spinal cord.

The damage makes nerves unable to send electrical signals to the muscles in the body. MLD sufferers lose muscle control and have difficulty **walking** and eating. Speech and behavior are also greatly affected.

"She cannot crawl or walk or even stand up on her own and has muscle spasms," Patterson explains, MLD is also a genetic disorder and both parents need to be carriers of the gene to affect the child, as is the case with Haydin.

Despite being turned away from clinical **medical** trials due to Haydin being too symptomatic, Haydin's parents are hopeful that the quality of her life will benefit from the help of holistic chiropractor John Bergman in Huntington Beach. Mariah and Joshua Jones, Haydin's parents, are asking people for prayers and donations to their gofundme account by searching the name: Haydin Jones on www.gofundme.com website.

The donations collected will help little Haydin get the **equipment** needed to assist with physical therapy and the expense of traveling to Huntington Beach once a week for chiropractic care.

"Seeing Haydin go through this is heartbreaking and we want to help her and help create awareness of MLD," Patterson says. She understands that there is no cure for MLD but hopes to celebrate Haydin's **birthday** nonetheless each year, thankful for every year her great-granddaughter is granted.

https://www.highlandnews.net/news/top_stories/hurricane-harvey-local-muslim-aid-worker-joins-effort/article_96bcb1aa-935b-11e7-98fa-abb0f4de1b04.html

EXCLUSIVE

TOP STORY

Hurricane Harvey-Local Muslim aid worker joins effort

By Subia Johri
Sep 6, 2017

The non-profit, humanitarian agency; Islamic Relief USA deployed 15 volunteers and staff members on August 28th to aid in the relief effort for Hurricane Harvey in Houston, Texas. IRUSA's Disaster Relief Coordinator and Southern California Muslim, Faran Kharal spoke to us from Houston about the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey and the efforts of his team to help displaced families.

Kharal and the rest of the Islamic Relief USA team of volunteers arrived at the mega shelter at K. Bailey Hutchinson Convention Center in Dallas which was set up with 5,500 cots for evacuees who were continually being bused in. The mega shelter is expected to almost meet capacity this week. Kharal told us "The shelter was well equipped with numerous agencies, providing medical care, food, clothing and baby care items. Many evacuees had no luggage and many had medical issues that needed care."

Kharal and the IRUSA team were in charge of many tasks according to their skillset. A CNA and other medical professionals worked in the infirmary treating and overlooking those injured in the disaster, while others did administrative and donation center work. At the shelter, Kharal was in charge of a process called intake, which involved touring and guiding new evacuees get acquainted with the shelter and the various services provided by the agencies in the shelter. The team worked alongside other agencies to provide the much-needed help.

Kharal and some members of his team were then assigned by the American Red Cross to conduct damage assessments door to door in Lake Jackson, where the water level dropped enough for Kharal to carry out the preliminary assessment reports on the damage to homes. These reports are part of the process that will later help residents apply for aid from FEMA. Kharal and others report back with their findings to the American Red Cross command center in Houston after their rigorous days.

When Kharal was asked of the rewarding nature of his work in the relief process in disasters, he replied “I consider it a privilege to work surrounded by people who are doing a sincere service to humanity.” Kharal is to return from Houston to IRUSA’s regional office in Orange County this week. Kharal has been a part of the relief process of many disasters nationwide such as, the Louisiana flood last year, Hurricane Matthew, the Sacramento Oroville evacuation and vividly remembers the

Flint Michigan water crisis, “Our team drove a truck with pallets of water which we were able to distribute to other volunteers who went door to door providing water to Americans who at the time didn’t have access to a basic need like clean drinking water.”

Kharal also spoke of the solidarity he is witnessing in the people and families from Hurricane Harvey “The families that first arrived in the evacuee shelter were keen on being placed together. They have gone through so much and are so resilient.”

https://www.highlandnews.net/news/local-muslims-share-sorrow/article_31bd3328-9f98-11e5-94fa-dbcee98944d2.html

Local Muslims share sorrow

By Subia Johri Special to Highland Community News
Dec 10, 2015



Yasmeen Siddique holds a candle for the victims of the San Bernardino shooting during a candlelight vigil at San Manuel Stadium on Dec. 3.

Photo by Subia Johri

Mosques around Southern California held candlelight vigils and memorials for the victims of the tragic San Bernardino shooting on Dec. 2. Local mosques such as the Islamic Community Center of Redlands (ICCR) held an interfaith memorial on Sunday, Dec. 6, at 11 a.m. The clergy, visitors of all faiths gathered at the mosque to remember and offer prayers for the 14 victims and their families in spite of the threats and hate messages received by local mosques in reaction to the shooting. Signs and pictures of the victims around the mosque read “Prayers and love to the 14 victims.”

At a news conference in Anaheim, the largest Muslim Civil Rights and Advocacy Organization of North America known as the Council on American Islamic relations (CAIR) along with the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California condemned the acts of the San Bernardino shooting. The two offered condolences to the families and loved ones of those killed and injured in the attack.

“The Muslim community stands shoulder to shoulder with our fellow Americans in repudiating any twisted mindset that would claim to justify such sickening acts of violence,” the organization’s spokesperson said.

CAIR also asked for people not to make generalizations on the entire Islamic faith and its followers based on the horrendous actions of those involved in the shooting.

At the San Manuel Stadium vigil, Dr. Shaheen Zakaria, a surgical oncologist and administrator of Peace Academy, a non-profit learning center in Redlands recalled her experience while working in San Bernardino on the day of the shooting.

“I tried to get my patients and myself to safety. It was a frightening experience but hearing what happened to many innocent people that day was truly heart wrenching,” Zakaria said.

While the fear of retaliation is a concern for local Muslims, Zakaria said, “All life is sacred and this is a time for mourning the loss of those sacred lives.”

https://www.highlandnews.net/community/observing-a-month-of-fasting/article_5702edf6-1b7e-11e5-8784-af91e7240add.html

Ramadan:

Observing a month of fasting

By Subia Johri Special to Highland Community News
Jun 25, 2015



Farzana, Cristina and Macy Ali display a festive Ramadan platter of dates during a fast opening.

Photo by Subia Johri

Thursday, June 18, marked the first fast of Ramadan observed by Muslims worldwide. Highland residents also observing Ramadan fasted for 16 hours from sunrise to sunset and will continue to do so each day until the celebration of the Muslim holiday of Eid, marking the end of fasting on July 17.

Ramadan is the holy month of fasting for followers of Islam. It focuses on the physical and spiritual renewing of one's self with emphasis on committing to helping the needy.

The literal meaning of the word Ramadan means to intensely heat, as to burn away the sins through acts of kindness and worship. Fasting for Muslims includes refraining from food and drink as well as ill speech, arguments and undue anger. The end goal of the graduates of the month of Ramadan is to achieve a closeness to God through full devotion and to gain compassion and solidarity with the less fortunate.

Local Muslims prepared for the month by looking into worthy community causes. For example, Macy Ali has been donating clothing to needy families and plans to donate to Feeding America, a network of food banks across the country.

“I want my kids and I to learn empathy this month and to be humble before our food that so many people don't get every day,” said Ali.

It is a common belief among those observing Ramadan that a true appreciation of food and a sharing attitude is attained through patient fasting.

“I prepared for Ramadan by ordering large quantities of dates in hopes of sharing them with our family, friends and neighbors,” said Maliha Ahmad of Highland. “I also like to prepare other traditional foods like Samosas (savory pastry filled with meats and vegetables) and kebobs to have on hand quickly when it's time to open the fasts.” Opening the fasts by eating dates is practiced by Muslims as it was the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad. The Quran was revealed to Mohammed during the month of Ramadan, according to Muslim tradition.

President Obama also hosts an annual fast opening dinner at the White House. The tradition was started by First Lady Hillary Clinton, followed by President Bush.

Thomas Jefferson was a staunch advocate of freedom of religion – no matter which one: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, or any other. While entertaining a diplomatic envoy from Tunisia in 1805, Jefferson delayed the meal time until after sunset out of respect for his guest's observation of the Ramadan fast.

Muslims of the Highland community find inspiration from Jefferson's act of kindness and strive harder to better serve the community through devotion to their faith.