

WestCoastNewsline

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Home of Hope raises \$100,000

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

San Jose, Calif

The eighth annual Home of Hope fundraiser raised \$100,000 in San Jose on November 12th at the Scottish Rite Center. There was an outpouring support at the gala dinner, as many of the nearly 700 attendees wiped away tears while listening to testimonies of lives that have been touched and changed by HOH's work. Pledges poured in, and a record-setting \$100,000 has been collected so far—with more pledges expected.

Nilima Sabharwal, president of HOH, spoke with passionate tears about children who have born into poverty, disease and are victims of society and their environment. A video captured the plight of children who have been robbed by their circumstances of a carefree childhood, and instead have to cope with a harsh world filled with struggles. Anju Bhatia stressed that pity was not the answer, but that "each one of us had the power to reduce the suffering" by making a commitment to help change a child's life.

HOH for Children works with about 1,200 children of HOH and the organization's 12 projects. Ashu Kalra, who has attended the dinners in previous years, felt particularly moved by this year's presentations and said, "This evening I have gained new respect for the work that is being



The Satya Paul fashion show at the Home of Hope Fundraiser.

done by HOH." Said Harjodh Gill, "I could not contain my tears by what I saw and heard tonight."

Women and men came glamorously-attired to the tastefully decorated hall. The evening program flowed smoothly under the light-hearted direction of Anil Lal, treasurer and emcee for the night.

Vikas Singh sang, with support from Minnie Shukla. A captivating fashion show included cutting edge designs by Satya Paul and local designer Anu Mahal. It was modeled by gorgeous beauties pro-

vided by Renu Dhillon. Dances performed by HriThyms had many people tapping their feet at their tables. Chef Mahal, owner of San Francisco's Chutneys restaurant put his heart into the toil of preparing scrumptious food, which was served with style.

No doubt the 700 guests who attended this wonderful event would agree that the hard work put in by countless volunteers, board and committee members of HOH truly helped further it's goal of "Making a difference... One Child at a Time."

Light of Asia to finally touch home

KALYANI VASAN

Los Angeles, Calif

DR RASHMEE Sharma, is the co-author of *Roshni: The Light of South Asia*, best described as a Who's Who chronicle of Indian Americans of merit in the USA.

"This two and a half year journey began with a mission to hopefully provide some insight and awareness of the South Asian community to mainstream America and the South Asian community itself. *Roshni* features 101 people of distinction, people who have been successful in their endeavors spanning every walk of life."

As a professor of English, Sharma was amazed at the lack of knowledge Americans students have about Indian American contributions to the US and felt the need to do something to dispel this. And so, she along with Ramesh Acharya embarked on 6 months of intense research followed by close to two years of literally 'tracking' down subjects, meeting them, adding on a lot of frequent flyer miles, professional photographs and the final push of the fingers to the computer keyboard.

The 227-page book was released in August and 43 libraries in San Diego County immediately ordered copies. The initial print of 5,000 was sold out in two days. Till date, nearly 2,500 copies of the \$297.00 book have been sold. "Luckily for us we also have many of the featured personalities personally involving themselves in popularizing the book as they see that it can be a valuable resource for students all over the country."

The book is being released in Delhi on the December 16, and will be launched in Mumbai on December 24 by the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Vilasrao Deshmukh.

Meet an Olympic TT aspirant

SAM RAO

Fremont, Calif

THE TMS Smash Table Tennis League, which was started in July, is the highest rank West Coast league after just one season. The league features three Olympians, Olympic hopefuls, and current cadet and junior team members of the US national team. The next season has attracted many sponsors, and will start in an elite league starting January 2006.

The Smash League features a top-rated team from Mountain View, with Khoa Nguyen, a 2000 and 2004 US Olympic Team Member, and several tams from Milpitas, Concord, Mountain View, and Palo Alto that feature Junior Olympians and top level players, including Olympics 2008 hopefuls.

The TMS league format features all team matches as best-of-nine matches, and each singles match as the best-of-five, to 11 points. Three players from each team play in a team match. Admission is free to matches.

Indian American Shashin Shodhan (27), one of the league's organizers spoke to *The Indian Express* in Fremont. Shodhan is winner of 15 national titles, was an alternate member of the 2000 US Olympic team in doubles and singles, and a hopeful for the 2008 Olympic team. Excerpts from the interview follow:



■ What are your future plans?

My main goal is win a medal in the 2008 Olympics in the team event and play for the US team in the 2012 London Olympics and 2016 Olympics, which will hopefully be in San Francisco—my hometown for almost two decades.

■ How did you start playing?

I got my passion for table tennis at the age of five, while living in Ahmedabad, India. I was very excited when I saw my father's trophy and high-quality paddle. He made a deal with me that if I hit the ball against the wall 100 times in a row

—one bounce allowed—he would give me his paddle. I spent hours and was able to get my paddle.

■ When did you move to the US?

I moved to the Bay Area at the age of six and played recreational ping-pong in the garage with my father and friends from age eight. At age 10, my dad saw an article about a local coach and club at Union City. That article changed my life and I have been at table-tennis ever since. I live in Fremont with my parents, dad Kudip—an electrical engineer; and mom Shobha, who runs a family import-export busi-

ness with my sister Shomi.

■ Where did you learn to play?

I learned how to play at the Palo Alto Table Tennis Club under Dennis Davis; he has been the US table tennis national coaching chairman.

■ Some of your achievements?

I have been ranked second in the US for juniors and have won 15 national titles. I was on the 2000 US Olympic team as an alternate. I was the US National Men's Singles Under-22 champion and a Junior Olympic Boy Singles Under-18 gold medalist. I was the US National High School singles and doubles champion and the National Junior High School singles and doubles champion. I was eliminated by the Olympic singles qualifier by two points in singles.

■ What about your education?

I took semesters off from UC Berkeley because of the Olympic trials. I graduated from Berkeley with a Computer Science degree.

■ Where have you traveled?

My travels have taken me to Sweden, China, Germany, and Taiwan. I have traveled all over North America and hit with 10 world champions. I have been coached by two world champions, Stellan Bengtsson and Tackan Carlsson—both Swedish national team coaches as well.

■ What tournaments and tryouts are coming up?

In December and January 2006,

we have the US Athletic national tryout, the Las Vegas Open tournament; followed by the US Collegiate table tennis tournaments.

■ How do you prepare? What about practice partners?

Apart from the TMS Smash League in the Bay Area and regular sessions, I plan to work with Stefan Feth, a German professional player, ranked about 150 in the world, who will be in the area next summer. I also plan to work with Han Xiao of Shanghai, currently in Canada, who has beat all ranked Canadian national team players. We also have Fan Yi Tong—ranked first in the US—visiting our league, so we have lots of players to work with.

■ What about exercise regime?

The training is intensive and builds up as we go into pre-qualifying term. More weight-training with extra strengthening in the lower body and legs.

■ How do you support yourself?

I am not a professional table tennis player. I am training to be a teacher in high school mathematics and table tennis. I am enrolled in the teacher credential program at California State University-East Bay and am also in training at Logan High School in Union City.

■ What is your best stroke?

My best stroke is backhand top-spin. My grip is slightly different and an unorthodox grip, with a finger curled in the traditional handshake grip.

