

Crane School's Annual Fundraiser Celebrates India, Crane's 80th, and Dedicated Teachers

By Ann Pieramici / Special to CASA

THE SPIRIT OF INDIA infused the Crane campus on Saturday, May 3rd, as the school celebrated *Our Passage to India*, the theme of this year's Spring Fundraiser. The sold-out event welcomed 320 current, future, and alumni Crane parents and supporters.

Buddha statues, a candle-lit passage, and colorful Mandala chalk drawings ushered guests to Crane's mystically transformed campus. Vibrant Indian fabrics blanketed the school, thanks to dedicated parent volunteers who sewed and draped tables, poles, couches, and tents with rich Indian patterns. Women wore embroidered saris or sparkled in their Bollywood-best while many turbaned men donned traditional Kurtis. The silent auction area resembled an authentic Indian mela, a marketplace where the community gathers.

In fact, it is India's strong sense of community that inspired the theme of this year's event. On a recent family trip to India, co-chair Nancy O'Connor recognized values in the Indian culture that reminded her of Crane – a close-knit community,

a balanced lifestyle and a devotion to education. "India is a fascinating place, rich in color and creativity; a country full of soul, where celebrations and festivals are a significant part of everyday life," noted O'Connor.

Co-chair Liz Dewell agreed, "We hoped to capture this sense of community and festivity."

The evening was not only

festive; it was hugely successful. The school raised over \$330,000 breaking all previous underwriting, sponsorship, and live auction records. Acting Head of School, Debbie Williams kicked off the evening, reminding parents that this is the single, greatest fundraiser of the year, having eliminated six fundraisers from the past year. A significant portion of the money raised will support the school's generous

tuition assistance program, which currently exceeds that of any other K-8 school in Santa Barbara. Williams also recognized Crane's 80th anniversary, celebrated this year, with a toast to Crane's past, present, and future.

Crane dads Kevin O'Connor and Palmer Jackson served masterfully as live auction emcees, and

entertainment included belly-dancers as well as a hilarious rendition of *Crane Will Survive* performed by parent Kelly Simmons, who channeled Gloria Gaynor's *I Will Survive*.

Debbie Williams closed the live portion with a request to support a teacher endowment, claiming, "You don't have a great school unless you have great teachers, and we have amazing teachers here at Crane." The audience agreed, raising their henna-hands to pledge over \$80,000 for teacher enrichment and professional development.

Committee members included Jules Allen, Lorie Bacon, Ella Brittingham, Carolyn Chandler, Brooke Dene, Steve Epstein, Beth Green, Jeppe Madsen, Debbie Mackall, Marion MacNeil, Amy Mayfield, Elizabeth McGovern, Jody Miller, Matt Morphy, Rita Otto, Annetta



Palmer Jackson and Kevin O'Connor, Master of Ceremonies



Liz Dewell and Nancy O'Connor, Our Passage to India Event Chairs Gurus

Patrick, Dave Quenzer, Cyndi Richman, Kelly Samuels, Ted and Kelly Simmons, Trish Soriano, Meghan Stoll, Daryl Stegall, and many others.



Silent Auction Chair Elizabeth and John McGovern, Event Sponsors



Marion MacNeil, Parents for Crane President; Debbie Williams, Acting Head of School; Liz Dewell, Event Co-Chair; Molly Green, Development Associate