

# Community Close Up

Evergreen  
Times

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## A matter of honor

Evergreen's Raj Budwal part of delegation to commemorate Gurgurab at White House

By Monica Uppal Popli  
Special to the Times

Financial planner and investment advisor Raj Budwal was working in his Piercy Road office on Nov. 16 looking at his appointments for the remaining days of the week when an invitation changed his entire schedule.

"You said White House?" said Budwal while talking to the United Sikh representative on the phone.

On Nov. 19, Budwal, a United Sikh volunteer, was in the White House among the delegation of 120 Sikhs from all over the U.S. invited to commemorate the 541st Gurgurab or the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh Guru and founder of the Sikh religion. The White House celebrated the event Friday, two days before the Gurgurab when millions of Sikhs celebrate the religious festival in their respective congregations in America and the world over.

President Barack Obama's message was conveyed in a statement: "On Sunday, many around the world will observe the anniversary of birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism. I send my best wishes to all those observing this extraordinary occasion. This is also an opportunity to recognize the many contributions that Sikh Americans have made to our nation, and to reflect on the pluralism that is a hallmark of America. Sikhism's principles of equality, service, interfaith cooperation and respect are principles shared by all Americans. As Sikhs celebrate the birth of Guru Nanak, people of good will everywhere can identify with his teachings on the equality of all humankind and the need for compassion in our service to others."



Congressman John Conyers Jr. (D-MI) and Raj Budwal at the 541st Gurgurab celebrated at the White House. Photo courtesy Raj Budwal

"President Obama has deep regards for the Sikh community and we are eager to work with you all," said Christina M. Tchen, head of the White House office of Public Engagement, welcoming the guests.

Last year, was the first time that this festival was ever celebrated at the White House. Dr. Rajwant Singh, chairman of the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE) and Paul Monteiro, Associate Director of the Office of Public Engagement were the emcees of this year's event. The program started with traditional kirtan (chanting hymns) with harmonium and tabla performed by Ragi Nirmal Singh Nagpuri, and Sukhjoewan Singh of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, India.

"The hymn 'Satguru Nanak pargateya mitti dhund jag chaanan hoya' performed at the White

House extols the virtues of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, a reformer who preached the message of equality, universal brotherhood and encouraged charity," said Budwal. "He pioneered the unique practice of 'langar,' free community kitchen, which is still prevalent today."

Along with Budwal, other United Sikhs volunteers from the Bay Area who attended the celebration were Ashween Sahni, Indermohan Singh, Loveleen Kaur Sahni, Harpreet Singh Sandhu, Parleen Kaur Shahi and Jagmohan Singh Sahni. United Sikh is a U.N. affiliated international non-profit, non-governmental, humanitarian relief, human development and advocacy organization, aimed at empowering those in need, especially disadvantaged and minority communities across the world.

Budwal visited Haiti in February as part of the United Sikh relief team to serve the earthquake-ravaged Haitians [Evergreen Times, March 20, 2010]. Among other things, in keeping with the Sikh tradition, the team cooked and served "langar" or free hot meals to survivors of the earthquake. Budwal also collected a donation of about \$20,000 for the quake-victims through his radio program Bay Area Third Eye.

Representatives from EcoSikh, Sikh Council on Religion and Education, Saldef and Sikh Coalition were among the attendees at the White House celebration. Speakers touched on the issues such as bullying in the schools against Sikh children, negative profiling and other challenges faced by the Sikh community. Sikh leaders highlighted the important contributions of Sikhs in society.

Bucky Monroe, head of community relations at the Department of Justice, while praising Sikhism's central message of fighting for justice, talked about the White House's continued wish to work with the Sikh community to prevent discrimination and hate crimes.

"Sikhs started coming to the U.S. in the early 1900's," said Budwal. "It is a matter of honor and great pride to be recognized and felicitated by the president and his staff. It was a gratifying experience"

See BUDWAL, next page

## Letters to the Editor

**Inspiring Pennies for Education article**

Editor,  
In an economy where parents are facing hard times, it is no wonder that our children are also seeing some of those repercussions. Fortunately, fundraisers like the penny drive [Evergreen Times, Nov. 27] not only bring in much needed resources but more importantly awareness.

It's uplifting to know that the cause can begin with our children to inspire other parents and communities to do the same. The notion of a penny donation emphasizes that fact that every little effort helps.

Lauren Mendoza  
Hayward

**Kudos**  
Editor,

I read the Evergreen Elementary Education Foundation fundraising articles in the Evergreen Times [Nov. 17 issue]. Thank you so, so much! Both articles, Pennies for Education and Soccer Tournament at Sportsplex are superb! Thank you for working so quickly to get the articles in this issue.

A huge thank you for making the articles separate so the kids and schools could be highlighted for all their hard work and efforts for the Pennies fundraiser. I know it will be meaningful and special to all the schools and kids to see their efforts recognized.

We greatly appreciate your time and support. Thank you, Monica

[Uppal Popli], for coming out to the EEEF soccer tournament and interviewing everyone.

We thank you for your kindness and continued support. We will keep you posted of our progress and events. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! You are the best!

Lisa Chapnerkar  
Evergreen Elementary  
Education Foundation

**Saving lives**

Editor,

The Humane Society Silicon Valley (HSSV), San Jose Animal Care Center (SJACS), the City of Palo Alto Animal Services and Town Cats (of Morgan Hill) would like to personally thank you for your coverage of our November \$10 Cat Adoption Special

[Evergreen Times, Nov. 13].

As a result of articles like yours and the accompanying photo of those five adorable kittens, we had an overwhelming response from the public! In just the first weekend, we collectively adopted out 150 cats and kittens between our four South Bay animal shelters and rescue organizations. I hear Towncats "sold out" of cats, SJACS "ran out" of kittens and HSSV adopted over 73 cats and kittens in one weekend between our three adoption centers.

I thought you'd want to know you are making a difference in our community! Thank of all the lives we've saved and enhanced.

Kelly Grant  
Marketing Manager  
Humane Society Silicon Valley

### Have an opinion?

Let the Evergreen Times hear from you! Send your letters to Managing Editor Jeanne Carbone at [jeanne@timesmediainc.com](mailto:jeanne@timesmediainc.com) or via postal mail to: The Evergreen Times, 1310 Tully Road, Ste. 112, San Jose, CA 95122

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Times **Community News**

**D8CRT**

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that she was newly appointed to be the Chair of the Economic Committee by Mayor Chuck Reed and funding for the Highway 101 overpass has been solidified and work should begin next year.

Unbeknownst to D8CRT President Bonnie Mace, Herrera presented a commendation to her for her work within the community and the organization. Mace was surprised and thanked the councilmember and roundtable.

Tom Huff, a volunteer and member of the D8CRT roundtable gave an update about the work that he and others are doing to help offset costs for the GATE program. They have held various fundraisers, including a soccer tournament at the Silver Creek Sports Complex to raise money; although difficult to do, they have raised about \$50,000 to date.

Jim Zito, the newly elected Evergreen School District Board Trustee and Envision General Plan Task Force member representing District 8, shared that the Task Force is moving forward in completing the 2040 General Plan (GP). The GP is the land use designation map for the City of San Jose. Zito shared that he made a motion to ensure that the Riparian Corridor be protected at the Nov. 15 GP meeting by asking the Task Force members to support a minimum 50 foot setback for all developments adjacent to a corridor. He explained the importance of protecting our waterways and animal habitats. His motion passed.



Amar Chadha, Paul Monteiro and Raj Budwal were among the delegation of 120 Sikhs from all over the U.S. invited to commemorate the 541st Gurburab at the White House. Photo courtesy Raj Budwal

**Budwal**

*Continued from previous page*  
once to be a guest at the White House and pay tribute to Guru Nanak Dev Sahib Ji, a great visionary who was the founder of Sikhism."

Budwal also runs Sarbat Ka Bhalla, a non-profit organization aimed at creating awareness about Sikhism (<http://www.bayareathirdeye.com/sarbatkabhalla/index.htm>). He distributes free materials and literature to advance the knowledge of Sikhism and Sikh scriptures. Sarbat Ka Bhalla also raises funds for philanthropic purposes.

Raised on the principles of 'naam japna' (remembering God through meditation), 'kirat karo' (earning an honest living), and 'vand chakko' (selflessly serving others, sharing income and resources), Sikhs believe in equality and well being of all human beings. This belief is reflected in the United Sikhs motto, "Recognize human race as one," said Budwal.

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