

Selfless birthday girls Claire and Hannah Black. Photo/Jon Clark

Solana Highlands student raises more than \$400 for Helen Woodward Animal Center in lieu of birthday presents

By Matt Liebowitz

Even at the age of 6, Solana Highlands Elementary School kindergartener Hannah Black is committed to the spirit of giving.

For her 6th birthday (Nov. 2), Black, with encouragement and organizational assistance from her mother, Jennifer, chose to collect donations for the Helen Woodward Animal Center rather than receiving birthday presents.

With donations ranging between \$10 and \$100, the 12-14 families in attendance at their Carmel Valley home — it was a joint birthday party for Hannah and her 3-year-old sister, Claire, whose birthday was Oct. 15 — raised \$440.

The inspiration for the fundraising idea came from Hanna's love for animals, and the "Criter Class" after-school enrichment program at the Animal Center,

which Hannah has been attending every Monday since September.

"She loves all the animals there," said Jennifer. "She's especially intrigued by the reptiles."

Choosing philanthropy over presents is an honorable decision, but despite her age, Hannah — and her mother — is no stranger to charitable work.

For her 4th birthday, Hannah forgave presents in lieu of making a donation to the Respite Center, an emergency childcare crisis center in Madison, Wisconsin.

Jennifer said her daughter "felt really proud," after her most recent good deed, but won't fully appreciate the magnitude of her efforts until she sees firsthand exactly whom she's helping.

"When she goes there," said Jennifer, "she'll realize, 'Oh wow, I'm doing something great.'"

Renowned author to hold book reading at Del Mar Library Nov. 9

By Robin Duncan

There is a remote valley in India with thousand-year-old forests redolent with cedar. It is intersected by streams and waterfalls, and surrounded on all sides by the majestic Himalayan Mountains. It is also a place where myth and culture are "alive and well," according to renowned poet, playwright, novelist and educator Kamla K. Kapur. Kullu Valley is her home for six months out of the year. It is where she found most of the inspiration for her latest book, *Ganesha Goes to Lunch, Classics from Mystic India*, 24 mythic tales, retold with a modern twist.

Kapur is settled back in her home in Del Mar with her husband, artist and writer Payson Stevens, after her six-month hiatus in the Kullu Valley of India. Since 1985, when they bought the land, the couple has lived half the year in this remote village and half in Del Mar.

Speaking of her book, she says that myths have always been part of her life. She believes that they provide wisdom and solace for those who wish to live life consciously. As a child growing up in India she imbibed the myths and continued to collect and study them as an adult. She chose the myths for this book based on an "instinctive preference." These were the stories that spoke to her on some deeper level and transcended thousands of years.

"When I started telling them, I realized that they had a lot to teach me." Kapur's insights are evident throughout the book, and the reader goes on the spiritual and philosophical journey along side Hindu Gods such as Ganesha, Shiva, Krishna, Rama and Vishnu.

The collection, published by Mandala, is alive with intricate drawings, and each of the chapters gives a brief introduction to the gods and goddesses.

"Ganesha son of Shiva and Pavati, is the star of Indian mythology. Popular with the masses, he is the big-bellied god with the body of a man and the head of an elephant...Ganesha grants all wishes and removes obstacles to success."

It is easy to see why Kapur chose the story of this colorful character for the title of the book. Yet the collection is filled with tales of intriguing gods, and playful animals in a reader-friendly format.

Kapur, also well-known for her plays and poetry, published the book in October 2007 and now that she is back in America, will be promoting *Ganesha* as well as working on some of her other writing projects. As a writer she says, "It's strange — you are always unconsciously writing all the time. You are plugged in."

Living in this Kullu valley paradise, she took the first sabbatical of her life. Kapur describes it as life changing. Surrounded by intense nature and her huge Indian family (that she refers to as her clan) Kapur embraced the time to continue her inner journey.

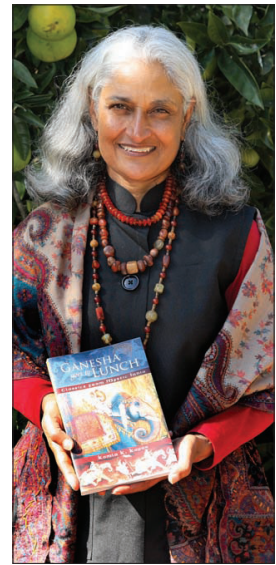
"I simply was — this whole business about being — it transformed me," she says resting at a local café in Del Mar. "It is really necessary in life to disengage from everything and get in touch with your humanity. I loved it. I don't think I have ever been this happy in my whole life."

It is a pleasure to hear and see this woman who represents two cultures, and speaks so respectfully of both. She is at peace equally in her Del Mar gardens as her home in the isolated "valley of the gods." The diversity of these two cultures seems to have helped her find a balance between the inner and the outer. America, she says, tends to focus more on the outer; they are very success oriented. However, India she describes "is like a huge amniotic sac. You are more in India."

Kapur plans to do more writing in Del Mar and promote her next book, due out in September 2009, published by Penguin. The subject matter for this book is the great Sufi poet, Rumi.

To see and hear Kamla Kapur read from her book *Ganesha Goes to Lunch*, drop by the Del Mar Library at 1 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 9. The tales are fun and entertaining, and Kapur breathes new life into them.

Perhaps you will even come away a little wiser. As the god Ganesha teaches when he goes to lunch at a greedy king's and devours everything in sight, we all need somebody to show us a mirror so we can see our real selves. The Del Mar Library is located at 1309 Camino Del Mar, (between 13th St & 14th St), Del Mar, CA 92014; (858) 755-1666.



Renowned poet, playwright, novelist and educator Kamla K. Kapur Photo/Jon Clark

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The Bishop's School to hold Admissions Open House Nov. 15

The Bishop's School will hold an Admissions Open House on Saturday, Nov. 15, from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

Reservation is not required. The event will be held at the Bishop's School campus: 7607 La Jolla Boulevard, La Jolla, CA 92037-4799.

Note that Bishop's will add a sixth grade in the 2009-2010 school year. Applications are now being accepted.

For more information, contact Joy Davis at (858) 459-4021, ext. 244 or davisj@bishops.com.