India Plaza Celebrates 10th Anniversary

Written by David M. Brown

India Plaza is celebrating 10 years serving the Valley of the Sun, highlighted by “India Plaza Night,” held April 14 at the two-acre center, 1872 E Apache Blvd., just east of McClintock Road in Tempe.

Photos by Russ Baurichter

Anchored by the award-winning Dhaba restaurant, India Plaza is the Valley’s one-stop for Indian food, culture and other products. The campus includes a snacks café serving “chaat” (Hindi, “street treats”), a cooking school, a market, gift boutique and beauty salon.

Owners Raveen and Clara Arora, residents of Gilbert, welcomed more than 100 people to India Plaza for the anniversary ceremony, including state Sen. Ed Ableser (D, 26), who read a proclamation that he and state Rep. Juan Mendez (D, 26) prepared. Arizona Governor Jan Brewer also sent a proclamation.

Representing Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell, Vice Mayor Onnie Sherkerjian read a city proclamation. In 2009, former Mayor Hugh Hallman also offered a city proclamation honoring the Aroras for their commitment to the city and to diversity.

U.S. Sen. Jeff Flake wrote to the Aroras, in part: “For the past decade, the India Plaza has served as more than just a business. It has become a place where Arizonans can experience the diverse traditions of Indian culture.”

In addition, U.S. Rep. Kyrsten Sinema, (D, 9) prepared a tribute for India Plaza, which was read into the *Congressional Record* in Washington, D.C.:

“Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring India Plaza of Tempe, Arizona for its ten years of dedicated service to the community.

“Since 2003, India Plaza has served as a meeting place and gateway for Arizonans into Indian culture. The plaza serves as a center for education and celebrating diversity. They have also been actively engaged with the wider community, donating land and funds to various causes and working with both local government and Arizona State University to promote a more accessible city. . . .”

“India Plaza serves as an excellent example to the rest of the Nation of what can be accomplished when people come together to promote diversity and understanding. It is my privilege to serve this great community. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating India Plaza on its ten years of service and in wishing it many more.”

A number of local talents helped India Plaza celebrate. Nicole Armijo, Kate Manzo, Rachel Boontjer demonstrated yoga techniques, and Gilbert’s Rohan Raghunandan, 14, offered a violin recital of Indian ragas, or melodies. During the event, Indian music was played by Kristopher Rein, sitar, accompanied by a tabla, or drum, player, and the McClintock High School Orchestra and Welcome Quartet, Doreen Press, director, entertained on the patio.

Kriti Dance provided an audience-participation Bollywood Dance demonstration, which the vice mayor volunteered for and enjoyed. Bollywood is Indian Hollywood, combining dance, music, passion and courtship.

Food was provided by The Dhaba, showcasing Punjabi cuisine from one of the country’s northernmost provinces as well as healthful food trends recommended by a number of organizations such as the American Vegetarian Association.

India Plaza's long-standing community-service programs have totaled approximately $200,000 during its 10 years, including supporting student associations at nearby Arizona State University, Tempe outreach agencies and charities such as Autism Speaks, No Kid Hungry, Make-A-Wish and the Muscular Dystrophy Association. The Aroras are also members of Local First, which encourages businesses and residents to shop in their communities.

For their work, the Aroras have won many awards including Best of the East Valley and Best of the Light Rail. The business has also been a nominee for the National Restaurant Association Good Neighbor award and Most Ethical Business award from the Better Business Bureau.

"We are honored and joyed to have been a part of this community for 10 years," Raveen says. "To everyone this important year, we offer a warm 'Namaste': 'Welcome.'"

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