

*Seema,  
Nice article + pict. Congratulations! All*

# Area marks Diwali with dance, food, family

By Keith Loria  
Special Writer

One billion people around the world celebrate Diwali each year as people gather on the 13th lunar day of Krishna paksha (dark fortnight) of the Hindu calendar month Ashwin to begin the five-day festival.

For many who celebrate, small clay oil lamps (or diyas) are placed at the thresholds of homes, shops and offices throughout the five-day celebration to remember the legend of the return of the Hindu god, Lord Rama, to his kingdom after 14 years in exile.

"Diwali is a celebration of

the victory of good over evil and of light over darkness and has major religious significance for those who are Hindu, Sikhs and Jains no matter where they live in the world," says Vinod Gupta, president of the South Asian Affinity Group at Princeton University. "We started celebrating this festival in University Chapel a few years ago to share the spirit of this most sacred Hindu festival with the western society."

Vincent Chandra, the coordinator of Hindu life at Princeton University, will be leading this year's celebration at the college, which takes place Saturday, Nov. 10, in the university chapel.

The evening features the offering of diya candles, devotional music and traditional worship. The night also will include Princeton Tarana, Naacho and special guests.

The Plainsboro Library, 9 Van Doren St., Plainsboro, will be hosting its 18th annual Diwali program from 1 to 5 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 10, featuring music by Hamid Khan and food by the Indian Hut.

"We will be doing some workshops to teach the kids about the holiday and allow them to do a hands-on project," says Neera Kothary, a library assistant in charge of this year's program. "We'll be making clay pots, and when



Princeton Library patrons participate in a Diwali celebration led by Seema Moon-dr, founder of Enjoy, Explore India, an Indian cultural study program ([enjoyexploreindia.com](http://enjoyexploreindia.com)).

there isn't room for that this year. Still, there's plenty happening to keep everyone having a good time.

"We will have musicians, games, and someone will be making a little speech," Ms. Kothary says. "We're also trying to include a fashion show related to different parts of India."

There also will be henna demonstrations and Diwali card making.

For more, call 609-275-2899.

Crown of India Diwali will be holding its annual buffet lunch and dinner beginning at 11:30 a.m. Saturday at 660 Plainsboro Road, Plainsboro. Both buffets promise to be larger than usual with a wide variety of great dishes.

The Princeton Public Library celebrated a little early, holding its first-ever Diwali celebration Nov. 4 in the Sands Library Building at 65 Witherspoon St., Princeton.

"Diwali is the Festival of Lights and one of the best known and widely celebrated Hindu festivals," says Janie L. Hermann, public programming librarian at the Princeton Public Library. "The library regularly holds similar events for other cultures (for instance, the Chinese New Year and Cinco de Mayo) as part of our mission to be a place that promotes lifelong learning. It is important to promote cross-cultural understanding and give community members an opportunity to learn with a hands-on experience about festivals and celebrations around the world."

At the event, Diwali celebrators participated in garba and dandiya (traditional dances), wore Indian clothes, made crafts, listened to stories and enjoyed visual displays.

"We will evaluate community response to the program, and if it is favorable, consider doing it yearly or at least on a semi-regular basis," Ms. Hermann says.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

**Fri. Nov. 9**

**English Conversation Class for ESL Students** from 1:15-2:45 p.m. at West Windsor Branch, Mercer County Library System, 333 N. Post Road, Princeton Junction, 609

grandparents and caregivers are invited to join the Historical Society of Princeton at 10 a.m. on a tour of local landmarks, architectural gems and hidden historical sites. The tour starts at 158 Nassau St. and lasts approximately 60

minutes. The tour is free for members and president of the University. \$7 adults; \$4 children. To register, call the Historical Society of Princeton, (609) 921-6748, x102, or email [eve@princetonhistory.org](mailto:eve@princetonhistory.org).

they are done, we will do a parade with lights inside what they have made."

Past Diwali celebrations at the library have included dance, but because of renova-