

## Festival Of India Torch Passes Through City Parks



**Commissioner Sam Olens being given a traditional Indian welcome by event co-coordinator Sangeeta Mayur as Padma Rallapali looks on. Photo by Farukh of Passion Photography & Video.**

Atlanta: The Festival of India (FOI) "Flame of Independence Torch" passed through the East Cobb Park, in Marietta on Sunday, the 18th of July. About 200 East Cobbers had assembled at 9am to welcome the chief guest Cobb County Commissioner, Samuel Olens. He was greeted at the entrance, in the traditional Indian style with "Aarati and kumkum" by the Cobb event co-ordinator Sangeeta Mayur. Olens lit the freedom torch which was followed by the flag hoisting and the singing of both national anthems.

The theme of this year's FOI annual celebration is to bring together the spirit and heritage of the adopted land, USA with the land of origin, India. In the spirit of this theme, 4 teenagers- Shivani Baiswalla, Pooja Mayur, Honey and Janvi Chawla dressed in the colors of the Indian flag and performed a dance to the Oscar winning "Jai Ho" from Slumdog Millionaire. Rahul Singi gave an interesting speech comparing America's Hollywood to India's Bollywood and Meha and Arohi Shrivastava compared the sentiment of mahatma Gandhi's Dandya march to that of the Boston Tea party. Kids performed numerous Bollywood dances and patriotic songs were sung by Abhay Gokhale, Madhavi Dave and Usha Balakrishna and her group.

"One of the main reasons for the Festival of India is in fact to build a bridge among the various folks that live in our country, and for all to get along and work well together to improve our cities, communities and country" said Olens who made it a point to stay till the end of the two hour celebration.

The Freedom torch which was inaugurated on July 4th 2009 at the Gandhi Statue, MLK Historic Site in Atlanta, continued its journey through Johns Creek on July 25th, Lilburn on August 1st, and Clayton county on August 8th. The grand finale will be at the Gwinnett Center on August 15th.

FOI 2009 Program Director, Padma Rallapali said that this year the torch has taken a historical role, linking American Independence on 4th of July with Indian Independence on August 15th and beginning at a historic site that embodies the civil rights movement. The FOI 2009 celebrations are organized by Indian American Cultural Association with partnership with VIBHA.

## Studio Students Perform Piano Pieces At First Recital

Atlanta: The PianoWorks ballroom in Duluth transformed into a parade of performers on Saturday, Jul 18. Students from Studio! played classical piano pieces at the school's first recital. The Seshadri brothers, Archith and Ashwin, founded Studio! in April, 2007 to train students in western classical music and theory. The school has an enrollment of 25 students focusing on the Alfred and Yamaha teaching methods with adaptations from the Associate Boards of Royal Schools of Music (London) and Australian Music Examination Board. Studio students learn read and write music and how to play scales, chords and songs. At Studio, students study supplemental theory including dynamics, sightreading, ear training so they have the correct techniques to play repertoire pieces.

Through periodic projects, examinations, and community performances, students become trained in all aspects of music.

At the recital, the kids played an eclectic variety of pieces including popular nursery rhymes like Old Macdonald and Row Row, Row Your Boat. Others performed Christmas songs like Jingle Bells while some kept to classical favorites like Beethoven's, Ode to Joy. Geet Bhargava played the Indian National Anthem and For He's A Jolly Good



Fellow. Two of the students, Rhea Sridhar and Gautam Ajay put their creative talents to test as they composed their own scores of music. Samhitha Dasari played Long Long Ago and Bald Gras Ich Am Neckar. Her sister, Srihitha, one of the school's youngest and

newest members, played Joyful Bells and Ode to Joy. Studio's first student, Hrudey Venkataraman played Vogel Hochzeit and Good Morning. Manasi Nair displayed her talent with Oh Suzanna and Going Home. Ananya Terala gracefully performed Banks of the Ohio and Good Morning, while Aman Garlapati played Oh Du Lieber Augustin and Going Home. After a Summer trip to India, Aditi Madhusudan wanted to tickle the ivories with Banks of the Ohio and Tic Tac Toe. Yasaswini Potturi played Jingle Bells and Hansel and Gretel while

## Ekal Vidyalaya & Atlanta Chowki Group Hold Mata Ki Chowki

Atlanta: The Atlanta chapter of Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of USA and Atlanta Chowki Group reverently conducted a "Mata Ki Chowki" at Global Mall on July 12th, 2009.

Ekal believes that the venerable "Mata" is not only Durga, the Destroyer of Evil but also symbolic of Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning and Lakshmi, the Goddess of Prosperity. This propitiation of the "Mother" also fits in with Ekal's philosophy of uprooting ills and bringing education and prosperity to rural and remote pockets in India, said a press release issued by the foundation here.

The non-profit, charitable trust is shaping a people's movement in India for people's education and empowerment. It initiates, supports, and runs non-formal one-teacher schools from Kashmir to Kanyakumari with a donation of only a dollar-a-day! As of July 2009 there are 26,855 Ekal schools where 771,315 students receive Basic education, health-care, development/vocational and empowerment education. In fact, Ekal firmly believes where the Goddess of Learning finds an abode, evil and ignorance disappear and prosperity eventually resides!

Inder Bery and Surinder Bahl meticulously organized the chowki. After Pandit Joshiji, propitiated the mother goddess, Kiran Chibber, Kalpana Bery, Vandana Bhandari, Nishi Sharma,

Navin Tyagi, Seema, Tilak, Harjeet, Shama and others sang melodious mata bhajants and bhajans. An unexpected treat were two bhajans sung in a mesmerizing voice by Nayan Pancholi who was briefly visiting Atlanta from Ahmedabad, India.



Mahaprasad was lovingly prepared and served by devout Ekal volunteers. Everything was so delicious that someone remarked that "Mother Goddess" herself has stirred the ladles in each pot!

Ekal raised 11 schools at the chowki. People were so impressed with Ekal's work that they were looking forward to the next Ekal event called "Tapasya" on September 12th at Paces Academy, Buckhead, GA. "The Narasimha Academy of Arts" is choreographing a thematic dance presentation around Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva's abode at Mount Kailash.

her brother, Akhil, performed Ode to Joy and Row Row Row Your Boat.

"Teaching and training our students at Studio! is extremely rewarding. We can transform lives, give them a sense of appreciation for the arts and help them aspire to dream big. It is a true honor to nurture them and to see their dedication, their passion and their commitment to music. Students who take music do well socially and academically. Our kids have won competitions and talent shows! Ashwin and I feel blessed to guide them through this journey," said Archith Seshadri. "It's good for parents to see what levels their children have reached and also for the kids to see their efforts. It feels good as teacher for your students to do well. It's fun to teach students because kids are so much fun to work with," said

Ashwin Seshadri.

For a majority of the students, the recital provided an opportunity to perform on stage for the first time, with a moment of triumph for the parents, students and teachers. The recital ended with each student receiving a trophy and a group picture to commemorate their accomplishments.

If you want to be a part of Studio! you can email Archith Seshadri at sesh1175@gmail.com or call 404.374.4251.