

Media release for non-profit organization
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23rd annual
HIMALAYAN FAIR

SATURDAY, MAY 20, 10-AM--7PM
SUNDAY, MAY 21, 10AM--5:30 PM

LIVE OAK PARK
1300 Shattuck Avenue Berkeley, CA
Shattuck and Berryman, North Berkeley

This is a benefit event for humanitarian grassroots projects
In the Himalayan Regions

Authentic Himalayan arts, antiques and modern crafts, live classical, folk music and dance performances and exotic foods highlight this 23rd annual outdoor celebration, a re-creation of a market bazaar, of the great mountain cultures of Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, India, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Mongolia. The only such event in the world, the Himalayan Fair raises money for well-researched grassroots projects in the Himalayan Regions.

This weekend event offers access to pertinent non-profit organizations providing travel information, health reports, mountaineering assistance, and current news concerning the Himalayas. The Fair is sponsored by the Himalayan Fair Committee.

The Himalayan Fair spontaneously originated from a cultural gathering created by Arlene Blum, well-known Himalayan mountain climber who led a successful all-women's ascent on Annapurna in 1978, and whose book *Breaking Trail A Climbing Life* was published this fall by Scribner, and Lama Kunga, a Tibetan Lama who lives and teaches at the Ewam Choden Center in Kensington, California. The festival began as a way for Himalayan peoples living in the United States to share the artistic and spiritual aspects of their cultures but in the last ten years, has become a fund-raising benefit for small grassroots children's education, medical, environmental, cultural and restoration programs in Tibet, India, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh. The Himalayan Fair has contributed over 180 thousand dollars, and the monetary impact is multiplied in developing countries.

Last years' proceeds benefited eight groups for a total of \$25,000 dollars. *The Kham Aid Foundation* supports temple restoration, reforestation, medical, and education in Kham Province, Tibet. The Himalayan Fair sponsors five Kham Aid middle school girls in Xinlong, Tibet and 17 middle and primary school girls in Batang District, Tibet. These girls correspond with us yearly; one girl writes:

My family is really poor. I don't have a father so I'm dependent on my mother. It makes me sad to depend on her, so this year in the summer vacation I went to stay up in the mountains and pick mushrooms. But the mushrooms were no good, so after

a while I came to the county town and did odd jobs to earn a little money, but it wasn't enough to pay the school fees. My mother and I ran around day and night trying to borrow money. So now that I have your sponsorship, it's all thanks to you that I could enter senior middle school and study together with the others in the classroom of education and knowledge. Without your help I would be back home working on the farm. Thank you so much.

In rural Bangladesh, arsenic contaminated drinking water from the major water supply source has subjected the population to the largest widespread poisoning recorded in history. Approximately 46 million people are exposed to arsenic contaminated water supply. *PRISM BANGLADESH* works with 12,000 rural poor women in the southern coastal belts of Bangladesh, to build contamination-free Hand Pump Tube Wells in the worst affected villages of Ramgoti and Shudharam with the objective of empowering rural women and the poor training them in planning, execution and system maintenance of the new wells. PRISM field staff selects experienced groups of local tube well-drilling mechanics and pump installation mechanics and elects a committee responsible for the sustained operation of the community pumps and water supply. PRISM field staff act as consultants and supervisors to ensure the completion of the deep tube-well installation. Over 1,000 families benefit from 10 wells. Each well and hand pump costs an average of US \$1000. The ten beneficiary groups receive a total of \$250 US dollars for installing the wells.

These are only two of the projects served by the Himalayan Fair. Others this year include donation for medical equipment for a recently completed Tibetan Health Clinic in ChaZhu Valley sponsored by the *TibetanAid Foundation*, clothes and bedcovers for orphanage children and vocational support for blind school children under *Virtues Children Nepal*, a children's charitable organization, math and science equipment for Nepal Village children in programs sponsored the *International Women's Sewing Group*, a community of middle-class Nepali housewives dedicated to women and children's welfare. Two other environmental projects *The Red Panda Project*, under Earth Island Institute for reforestation and conservation in Eastern Nepal, and *The Institute for Simplified Hydroponics*, an integrated farming, conservation work for Tibetan subsistence farmers and herders bringing simplified hydroponic technology and microfarming to preserve nomadic culture in Muli Tibetan Autonomous Region.

The Himalayan Fair is a unique experience in harmonious diversity. One ambles among tents and booths scattered under the towering oak and redwood trees of the park. There is spicy aroma of food baking over charcoal, sounds of bells and singing, Tibetan long-horns and children laughing in western and eastern garb. It is a rare occasion where Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews, Christians and secular folks gather in peace and pleasure.

The Himalayan Fair offers a wide range of accomplished stage performers (for children and adults) coordinated by Katherine Kunhraman of the Kalanjali Dance Company, and Barbara Framm of the Vishnu Tatwa Das Company, featuring a range of international groups showcasing classical and folk traditional music, dance and costumes of their cultures. Performers include Qawwali Music of Shabaz with Sakhawat Ali Khan and Riffat Salamat, children of the renowned late Usatad Salamat Ali Khan and Richard Michos, western Zakir Hussein inspired musician, Odissi Classical Dance of Vishnu Tatwa Das, Mirage & Echo of Mongolia - featuring professional acrobatic and throat singing feats, children's dance from Nepali and Tibetan Associations of Northern California, and Natya Rasa, Aggie Brennaman and Kalanjali children's dance classes.

The Fair's purpose is in sympathy with Milarepa the 11th Century Tibetan Buddhist, poet and hermit saint who said:

To give alms to the needy with compassion
Is equal to serving Buddhas in the Three Times.
All the happiness one has is derived from others
All the help one gives to them
In return brings happiness.

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j-peg photos on request

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