



SUSAN TRIPP POLLARD/TIMES

**GIRLS FROM AROUND** the East Bay learn Persian dance from Shahrzad Dance Academy instructor Shahrzad Khorsandi at a San Ramon community center.

# INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

By **Sophia Kazmi**  
and **Eric Louie**  
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

**R**adical growth in eastern Dublin and the Dougherty Valley of San Ramon is bringing more than new homes.

Since 2001, school enrollment figures paint a picture that shows the once predominately white Tri-Valley population is becoming much more diverse.

School and city officials are not waiting for confirmation from the official 2010 census to embrace the change.

In the San Ramon Valley, students of Asian descent make up 17 percent of the district's 23,815 enrollment. But in the Dougherty Valley's new middle school and three new elementary schools, the Asian enrollment has shot up to 46 percent.

"This is certainly the most diverse

experience I have been in, in the district," said Donna Yokomizo, Hidden Hills Elementary School principal and 30-year employee of the San Ramon Valley School District.

Her Dougherty Valley school's enrollment is 51 percent Asian, 31 percent white, 11 percent Filipino, 4 percent Latino and 2 percent black.

At a recent dinner to celebrate Hidden Hills' diversity, families dressed in clothing typical to their nationalities. They brought food native to their cultures including sushi, Indonesian drinks, Indian rice dishes and pasta entrees. Third-grade pupils ended the celebration by performing dances representing the different cultures.

The enrollment trend is mirrored in eastern Dublin. In its two new schools, 41 percent of the pupils are Asian, 31 percent white, according to district statistics.

Across the district, 21 percent of its 4,912 pupils are Asian, 49 percent white.

See INFLUENCE, Page 8



SUSAN TRIPP POLLARD/TIMES

**AT APNA BAZAR**, a \$20 grocery purchase comes with a free movie rental. Owner Saleha Kehn waits as Praveen Kesani of San Ramon discusses his DVD decision with his wife Feb. 18 in Dublin.

**ONLINE:** Talk about diversity in the Tri-Valley and see more photos at [ContraCostaTimes.com](http://ContraCostaTimes.com).

# Influence

FROM PAGE 1

Movement of Asian populations into mostly white suburban areas is part of a statewide trend, said Hans Johnson, demographer for the Public Policy Institute of California.

"Because of large improvements in immigrant situations from one generation to the next, it's common for the next generation to move to where the good schools are and to get a better home," Johnson said.

Yokomizo said many Hidden Hills parents are highly educated, and many work in high-tech fields. Having their children attend a good school is a key motivator for many of the families moving into the area where 24,000 new homes will be built by 2020 with about 75,000 new residents.

Prices for the new single-family homes range from around \$700,000 to well over \$1 million. Many of the new families are moving from the South Bay, Fremont and Hayward, which have large populations of people from the Asian continent — including those from China, India, Pakistan, Southeast Asia, Korea and Japan.

Responding to the new population, San Ramon's parks department is offering cultural classes at the new Dougherty Valley community center, including an Indian dance class and a Persian dance class.

At the Persian dance class, little girls in pink dance outfits gracefully sway their arms as they move to the beat of classical Persian music. They practice moving in quick, three-steps across the floor following the lead of their instructor, Shahrzad Khorsandi.

She has a dance studio in Berkeley and had been teaching in Orinda but wanted to locate closer to where her new students live.

"There is a really huge Persian population between Walnut Creek and Pleasanton," she said.

Khorsandi asked San Ramon city officials about offering her class through the Parks and Community Services Department. "They were very, very open to it," she said. The city "was working on expanding its programming, so it worked out



SUSAN TRIPP POLLARD/TIMES

**BENJAMIN, 8, Brendan Hy, 4, and their families conclude an evening of dining on international food by dancing the hokey pokey on Jan. 26 at Hidden Hills Elementary School in San Ramon.**

When San Ramon's Dougherty Station library opened in September, the celebration featured a Bollywood theme, focusing on movies filmed in India and starring south Asian actors. And the library features a healthy collection of books in Hindi and other languages familiar to the new population.

beautifully."

And other changes are evident to accommodate the new population now and in the future.

When San Ramon's Dougherty Station library opened in September, the celebration featured a Bollywood theme, focusing on movies filmed in India and starring south Asian actors. And the library features a healthy collection of books in Hindi and other languages familiar to the new population.

Soon a new cricket pitch will be in place at Monarch Park in San Ramon. Another is planned for a future phase of Emerald Glen Park in Dublin — accommodations to appeal to cricket-loving new residents from India and Pakistan.

"We're recognizing family gatherings are very important," said Jeff Eorio, director of San Ramon's Parks and Community Services.

"Because the different cultures have large, open gatherings, we see all of the park shelters are in use, and in designing

future parks we have plans for more."

Dublin Adult Education, now in its second year, has about 65 students in its course teaching English as a second language, which teaches skills in shopping, health care and employment, said principal Bryce Custodio. A similar class started at the new senior center two weeks ago.

Prabha Duneja of Shiva Vishnu Temple in Livermore said most of the 20,000 members of the Hindu temple come from the Silicon Valley and South Bay, but numbers from the Tri-Valley are growing.

"A lot of Indian people have moved to this area because of these big companies that have come to this area," she said, referring to high-tech companies like Sybase in Dublin.

The new population is bringing new specialty businesses to the area as well.

There are now three Indian grocery stores in Dublin, and a fourth will open soon near Hacienda Crossings. There are also

a couple in Pleasanton and Livermore.

When Saleha Khan bought the Apna Bazar store in Dublin three months ago, she wasn't expecting to see so many Indian and south Asian groceries in the area.

"We were surprised by the number of stores," said Khan, who moved from Santa Monica. "There are so many for such a small town."

Despite the others, business is brisk. Apna Bazar has carved itself a niche by providing halal meat. The animals are slaughtered in a certain way, with a prayer said over them before slaughter.

Families interviewed for this story said the schools and new neighborhoods are what convinced them to move here and that they were surprised to find such diversity.

The diversity is easily seen in Roberto Clemente's class at Fallon Middle School, which opened this year in eastern Dublin.

The campus, located on a hill surrounded by fields of new homes under construction and signs to lure new buyers, is also temporarily serving kindergarten students.

Of about 30 students in Clemente's morning seventh-grade history class, about three-quarters are of Asian descent. And students have helped reflect their diversity in the classroom. There is a prayer rug from Mecca and a woven plate used in India which students brought from home.

"It's more of a world culture than world history," Clement said. The diversity helps in teaching the curriculum, which recently covered Islam. "Because it's so diverse, (the students) are more accepting of different cultures. There is a connection between the cultures we teach and the cultures we come from."

Randall Chow of San Ramon is a Hidden Hills parent who moved his family from Pacheco two and a half years ago.

"We came for the schools," said Chow. "The diversity is just an extra bonus."

Reach Sophia Kazmi at 925-847-2122 or skazmi@cctimes.com.

Reach Eric Louie at 925-847-2123 or elouie@cctimes.com.