

FAMILY

Thousand Oaks family makes charity a priority

■ Siblings team up to help victims of Nepal quake

By Shreya Chattopadhyay
Special to the Acorn

"Who have you helped today?" This is the question Thousand Oaks resident and Nepal native Deven Pandey asks his kids, 8-year-old Akash and 6-year-old Harmony, every day after school.

"Obviously as a parent we have to take care of things like school, but I also think it's important to teach them the lesson (of helping) early on," Pandey said.

So when they heard about the earthquake in their father's native country in April, Akash and Harmony, students at Aspen Elementary School, rushed to help.

"I felt really sad about what happened in Nepal because it's just really sad to see a country getting destroyed by a 7.3 earthquake unexpectedly," Akash said. "When I saw a lot of the temples . . . I wanted to help."

Akash, who had been to Nepal once when he was about 4 years old, was particularly affected by the destruction of the country's many religious temples, which he remembered visiting when he was younger.

"It's just the texture, it's how



THINKING OF HOME—Deven Pandey and his children, Harmony, 6, and Akash, 8, are raising money for victims of the April earthquake in Nepal, Pandey's native country.

• MICHAEL COONS
Acorn Newspapers

tall it is, it's so circular," Akash said. "There's like designs in every little part of it, and I just kind of felt really sad because that was such a cool and neat temple."

In order to help the Nepalese people, the kids worked with their dad to find ways to raise money and awareness for those affected by the earthquake. Their campaign, called "Kids for Kids," includes a GoFundMe page, which

has raised over \$2,000 since April 29, as well as various other efforts.

One is designing T-shirts with the inscription "Kids Love Kids." The shirts feature a globe and symbols of the Nepali flag.

"The globe means that kids from all around the world love kids from Nepal," Harmony said.

The shirts are being sold for \$10 each, and all of the proceeds are sent directly to Nepal through

Western Union.

Akash believes the T-shirts are a good way to raise consciousness.

"T-shirts give the city more awareness that they need to jump into action," he said, "because if every person in the whole country of America donated even just one penny, there would still be a lot of money to go around in Nepal."

Harmony asked guests at her birthday party May 2 to bring donations for the earthquake victims rather than presents.

"I got money and presents!" Harmony said, "We got \$410 for my birthday, and two of my boys from my class emptied out both of their piggy banks . . . I learned that emptying out their piggy banks can get a lot of money!"

Making a difference

Any amount of money raised goes a long way.

"A dollar feeds about four kids a day in Nepal," Akash said.

In accordance with the name of the campaign, the money raised is specifically being used to help children in rural villages in Nepal where aid is not readily available.

Pandey sends the money raised by his children to his friend Bishwo Subedi of Los Angeles, who was in Nepal on vacation when the earthquake hit and decided to extend his stay by several months.

"They tell him exactly what to

HOW YOU CAN HELP

To donate to Kids for Kids, go to www.gofundme.com/kids4kids-Nepal. To contact the Pandey family and buy a T-shirt, email bykids4kidsnepal@gmail.com.

buy," Pandey said. "(Subedi) buys (the supplies) and puts them in a truck, and they go around in the villages. And these are like remote villages where the government and NGOs haven't yet gone."

The supplies Akash and Harmony choose are not limited to the basic food and clothing; they also send support for schooling and disease prevention.

"First we send school supplies, things like pencils, pens, study books . . . The earthquake hit near the end of the school year, and a lot of kids were probably studying for their end-of-year tests," Akash said. "The last batch we sent, we sent a bunch of mosquito nets because the rainy season is coming and the mosquitos are biting people and giving them diseases."

Through the use of social media such as Facebook, Akash and Harmony are able to see the direct impacts of the money they have been raising.

"I saw the videos of the kids having their scarves, the videos of kids enjoying their school supplies, and I just felt so happy that I was able to help them," Akash said.

While their immediate efforts are focused on their family's home country, Akash and Harmony's desire to aid others does not seem to stop with the Nepal earthquake.

"It's not just for the Nepal earthquake. I think it's for every kind of destruction that could happen. We need to help," Akash said.

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Dates are July 1, 14 and 28 and Aug. 11. The program is basically the same on each day.

Summer S.H.A.R.E. teaches children age 7 to 13 the concept of sharing the gifts of the world through science, health, activities, respect and environment.

Activities include a hike to the painted caves with 3,000-year-old pictographs.

The program cost is \$15 per day. Campers need to bring a healthy sack lunch and wear hiking or play attire.

To sign up, email Lisa Linn at Lisa@ecoeathenrichment.org or call (805) 795-3558.

CONTENTS



16

16 RECOGNITION

Ranger who saved three people from drowning is honored by state Department of Parks and Recreation

26 DOING GOOD

Kids raise funds to help children in Nepal who were affected by April's earthquake



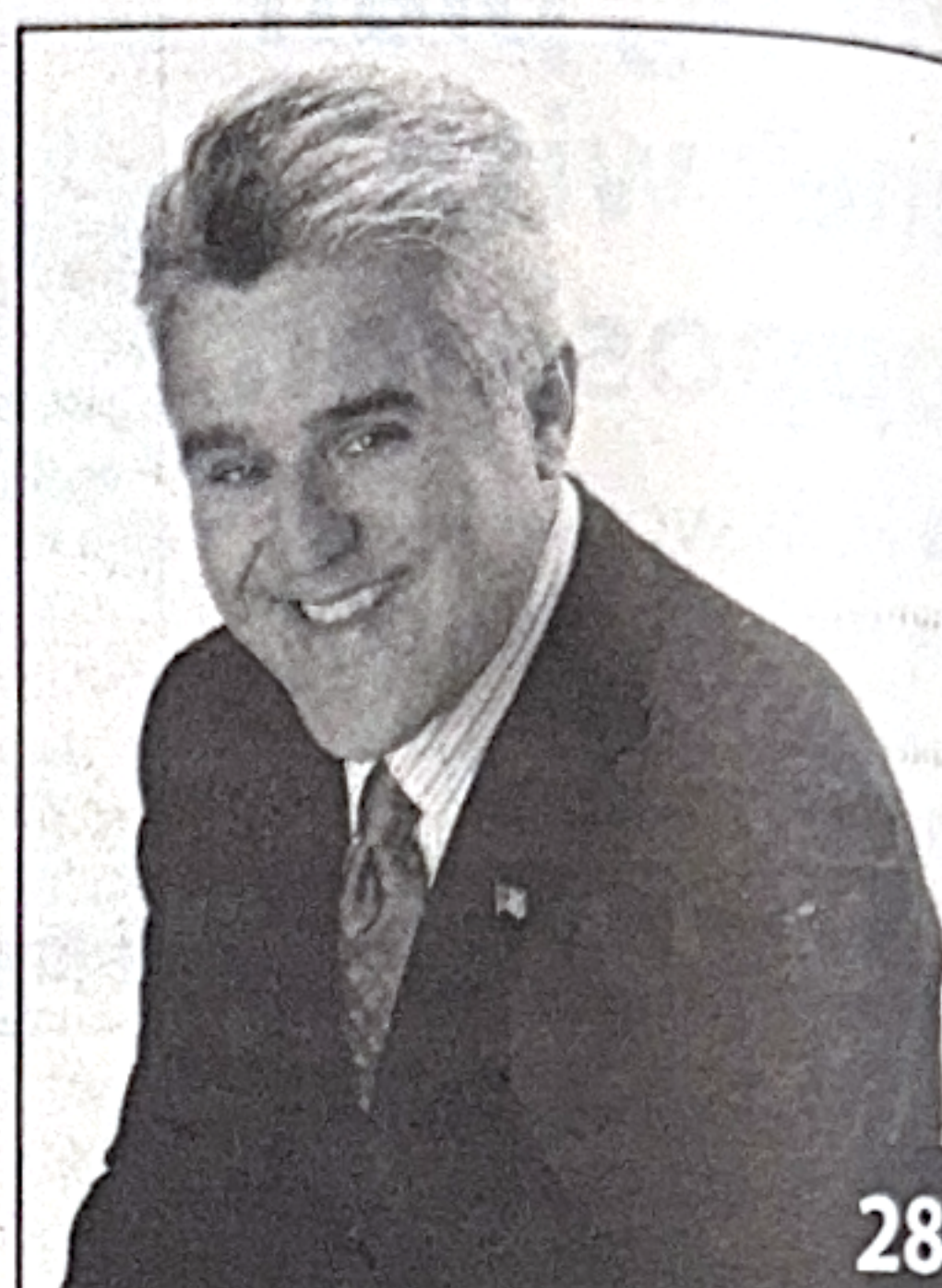
26

28 COMING SOON

Civic Arts Plaza announces acts that will be coming to its theaters

43 TEEN LEADERS

Students create club for youths who have or want to start their own business



28

Opinion.....	6
Sheriff's Blotter	15
Neighbors.....	16
Family	26
On The Town.....	28
Movie Listings.....	28
Calendar	29

Camps & Schools.....	33
Sports	36
Health	39
Faith.....	40
Business.....	43
Real Estate.....	1B
Classifieds.....	11B

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