

HONORING
VOLUNTEERS
WHO MAKE A
DIFFERENCE

CREST Awards
scheduled May 28

By EMILIE CROFTON

There are people who dedicate hours upon hours to helping others in their community. They do it quietly, expecting nothing in return.

The city of Cupertino thinks otherwise. It will honor some of those volunteers with a not-so-quiet presentation May 28 at 7 p.m. in the Cupertino Community Hall, 10350 Torre Ave.

The Cupertino Recognizes Extra Steps Taken, or CREST, award honors outstanding community volunteers who are making major contributions to the quality of life in Cupertino.

This year's CREST Awards go to Stuart Chessen, Amanda Cuva, David Greenstein, Michael and Vivian Hurley, Gail and Howard Jensen, Frances Ota and the Aloha Nani Hula Dancers, Krishi Peddada, Kay Roberts, Jack and Donna Van Schaack and Chuck Worley.

Chessen and Ota illustrate the wide variety of volunteer activities in the city—from emergency services to the arts.

Chessen, a Cupertino resident, has been involved in volunteer emergency service including the Community Emergency Response Team, Cupertino Amateur Radio Emergency Services and the Sheriff's Office Volunteer Search team for more than 20 years.

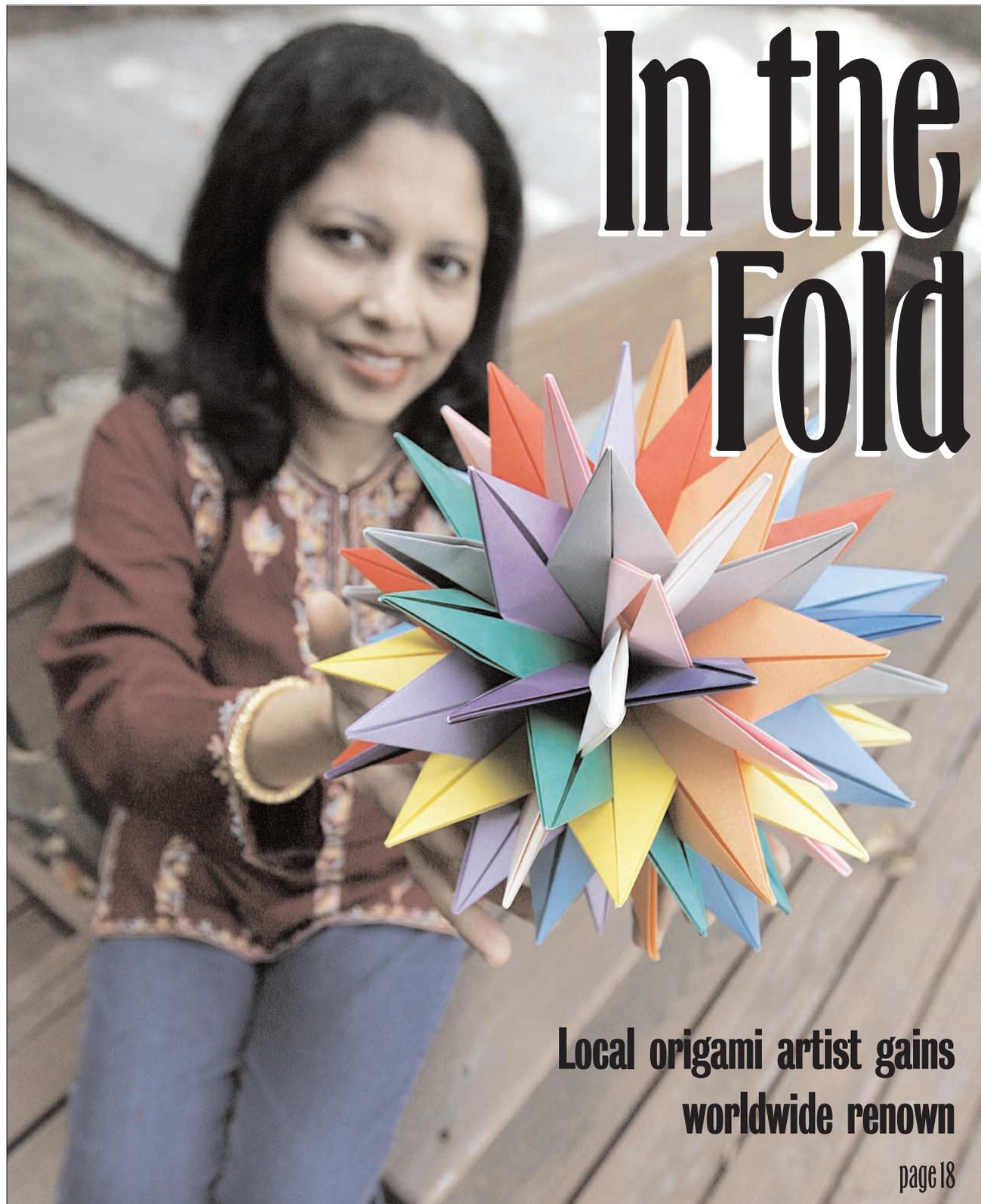
"There's a need to make people aware of potential hazards that can happen in the future," Chessen says. "We want to make sure families can take care of themselves for at least three days. Neighbors

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Cupertino COURIER



Volume 61, Number 8 • May 21, 2008 • Cupertino, CA • Est. 1947 • www.cupertino Courier.com



Photograph by Jacqueline Ramseyer

In the Fold

Local origami artist gains
worldwide renown

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Meenakshi Mukerji holds an origami model of her own creation, called the 'QRSTUWXYZ-Nanogon Star Planes.' Mukerji is set to publish her second book on the ancient Japanese paper art.

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Origami artist Meenakshi Mukerji demonstrates how she puts together her models, which can take up to five hours. The one pictured here is called 'RSTUVWXYZ-Rectangles.'

Bent into Shape

Ancient Japanese art is growing in popularity

By EMILIE CROFTON

Photographs by JACQUELINE RAMSEYER

Meenakshi Mukerji takes the ancient Japanese art form of origami—or paper folding—far beyond the making of simple paper cranes.

Mukerji, a resident of Cupertino, is famous in the origami world for her masterful modular designs, using multiple sheets of paper to

create complex structures without scissors or glue.

In 2007 Mukerji published her first book, which became one of the top-selling origami books worldwide, and is now working on her second.

"Meenakshi's work is both intricate and lovely. She's greatly

respected in the origami world, one of the well-known world leaders in modular origami," says Robert Lang, a doctor who has been making origami for more than 40 years and is considered one of the world's leading masters of the art.

Mukerji's art pieces consist of a

variation of intricate geometric shapes and figures, all of which are her own designs, but inspired by Japanese origami artists Tomoko Fuse and Miyuki Kawamura.

"People think origami is only child's play, but it's not," she says.

She says her success would never have occurred if she hadn't

accidentally stumbled upon the art form 13 years ago.

Mukerji remembers folding as a young girl growing up in Kolkata, India, making cranes and flowers. But it wasn't until 1995 that she was reintroduced to the art, after a friend invited her to attend a class on modular origami.

"I fell for it right away because it had a lot of math and symmetry. I was hooked. I found a new interest for the art," Mukerji says. "By themselves, the little pieces don't look like much." However, the end result can be spectacular.

Mukerji began a website just for fun but quickly received positive responses and requests for her to post her diagrams.

"Her website is a tremendous contribution to origami. It's great that she's in this field," says Rona Gurkewitz, author of four books on origami.

It wasn't until she won the 2005 Florence Temko award by Origami USA that Mukerji started taking her origami seriously and decided to write a book.

Published by A K Peters Ltd., *Marvelous Modular Origami* offers step-by-step instructions for more than 30 different modular origami structures. By the end of the year, the book was a best-seller.

"For its first year out, that was quite an achievement for me," she says.

Mukerji is working on her second book, *Ornamental Origami*, which she says will be available by the holiday season.

Mukerji's books, written for intermediate origami artists, are full of colorful pictures and diagrams.

"Her books offer a nice exposition of the mathematical elements, but you're not being hit over the head with math lessons. You learn things without even realizing that you have," says Lang, who has written eight books on origami.

Mukerji, who spent more than 10 years in the software industry, devotes her time to her family while working on her upcoming book.

While she has also dabbled in painting, origami is her favorite art form. As a busy mother of two sons, she finds origami's mobility very handy.

"For a painting, I have to be stuck in front of it for hours," she says. "Origami fits into my busy schedule. I can do a little at a time."

New designs will pop into her head at any time, so the ability to practice anytime, anywhere, is extremely practical.

"Sometimes I'll wake up with an idea for a new design," she says. "I'll be at one of my sons' soccer practices, pull out a receipt and start trying new designs."

The low cost of the art form is also appealing.

"It's not an expensive hobby. You can use all sorts of paper and fold it out of anything," she says. "If you goof, you can just throw it away."

In addition to her new book,



(Above) Meenakshi Mukerji is surrounded by origami modeled from her original designs.

(Right) Origami artist Meenakshi Mukerji demonstrates how she puts together her creations.

Mukerji is also reaching out to local residents. She will host her first public workshop June 5 in the Sunnyvale Public Library at 7 p.m. She will teach teens and adults how to create a 3D geometric shape using only one folding pattern.

For more information on Meenakshi Mukerji, visit www.origamee.net.

For more information on the upcoming workshop, visit www.sunnyvalelibrary.org or call 408.730.7300. Space is limited.

