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Holi Festival of Colors welcomes spring in San Francisco

Celebration hosted by South Asian community of The Crossing at East Cut



Jolly Shah takes part in the Holi festival celebration at The Crossing at East Cut in San Francisco on Sunday. (Harika Maddala, Bay City News)

By Harika Maddala

Anyone walking or driving by Folsom, Howard, Beale or Main streets in San Francisco on Sunday's windy afternoon could hear Bollywood party music blasting along the block while clouds of colored powders flew through the air.

The Crossing at East Cut, the former Temporary Transbay Transit Terminal and now a community destination, hosted its first Holi festival in partnership with TogetherSF and Ideate SF on Sunday. TogetherSF hosted a dumpling-making event for Chinese New Year in February.

"There was such a good response to the [dumpling] event that I was like, we should do more cultural events, and we've Holi coming up, and I've never seen a Holi event in San Francisco," said Kanishka Karunaratne Cheng, the executive director and cofounder of TogetherSF. "And I know there is a South Asian community here, and there are a lot of South Asians in the East Cut neighborhood."

Holi is the Hindu festival of colors marking the arrival of spring and celebrating the triumph of good over evil. While the calendar date for the festival changes every year, Holi fell on March 18 this year, when many South Asians across the Bay Area celebrated the festival after missing the celebrations two years in a row amidst the pandemic.

Sharing how quickly the event came together with the help of sponsorships, Karunaratne Cheng added, "I think there is a cultural need for these kinds of events, especially after the pandemic, right?"

The event was District 6 supervisor Matt Haney's first time celebrating the festival.

"It's great to see people just together enjoying themselves, releasing a lot of the stress of the last few years and welcoming a brighter future for our city," Haney said. "You know it symbolizes the coming of spring but also the triumph of good, and that's a message that we need, you know, after a very tough couple of years."