



## DIWALI: RINGING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH SWEETNESS & LIGHT

### Long Island Children's Museum marks traditional Hindu festival

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Priya Mani and her daughter glued colored paper and baubles onto decorative Indian banners called "toran" yesterday at the Long Island Children's Museum in Garden City.

"It's awesome," Mani said. "We're living so far away from home. You try to give the kids some of their culture."

Mani, 44, a finance worker originally from Bangalore, India, who lives in Hicksville, was among the diverse throng of children and their parents enjoying the sweets and dances at the museum's first Diwali Festival.

Diwali, a Hindu holiday known as the "Festival of Lights," celebrates the new year in India and continues for five days.

Aimee Terzulli, the mu-

seum's director of education, said the museum started the event because there "was a rise in the number of people who celebrate Diwali on Long Island."

Last week the Syosset school board decided it will recognize Diwali as a school holiday next year. According to 2010 census data, Long Island is home to about 56,000 people of Indian descent.

"This is a harvest festival," said Abha Roy, a dance instructor who led dance workshops at the museum yesterday. "We celebrate our wealth and our harvest with each other."

Roy led a troupe in traditional and regional dances at the festival in a performance that began with dancers placing small lamps on the stage. Roy said the lights of Diwali, known as diyas, represented the "light inside" us.



Top, dancers perform at the Diwali Festival at the Long Island Children's Museum in Garden City yesterday. Above, visitors make rangoli patterns on paper plates. ■ Video: [newsday.com/gardencity](http://newsday.com/gardencity)

Diwali is also a time for sweets. Divya Patel, 20, of Plainview, a junior at Adelphi University, volunteered at the

event yesterday, explaining the differences between traditional sweets to visitors as they took samples. Her fa-

vorite was the Jalebi, a deep-fried batter soaked in syrup. "I like that it's crunchy but sweet," Patel said. Though



Helen Lu of East Rockaway helps her children make Diwali holiday spoons. The festival is also a time for sweets.



Children learn traditional dances from different regions of India at a festival workshop. The holiday lasts for five days.

born in the United States, she said she's grown up celebrating Indian holidays.

"You like to start the new year with sweets so the upcoming year will be full of sweetness and happiness."

Dr. Kedar Radhakrishna, a 33-year-old physician from Plainview who came to Long Island from Bangalore with his wife and son, said the holiday is "really about family . . . it's a nice time to

get together."

Maureen Mangan, the museum's director of communications and marketing, said the Diwali celebration at the museum was an opportunity for people to celebrate their own culture or get to know someone else's.

"If this is not a holiday that you celebrate, this is a place to make a connection," Mangan said.