



September 9, 2010

The Community Newspaper of Evergreen Valley / Silvercreek Valley since 1982

## Current Headlines in Evergreen

July 15, 2005

### ESD NEWS BRIEFS

Akash Gupta

#### ***Evergreen student heads to Hong Kong for international math contest***

Evergreen's Akash Gupta will represent the United States as a member of a four-student team at the ninth annual Primary Mathematics World Contest, the only international math competition for middle school students 13 or younger.

He is already in Hong Kong for this international competition, joining contestants from about 50 different countries around the world, including China, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Bulgaria, Cyprus, South Africa, India, Mexico and Mauritius.

#### **Qualifying, preparing**

The contest consists of individual and team competitions. Team participation in the PMWC is by invitation only. To be selected for the American team, top math students from various middle schools competed via qualifying tests. Out of these tests, only four students were selected to compete as part of the American team beginning the week of July 18.

"Akash entered a regional math contest earlier in the year, just on a whim—with no preparation," said Akash's father, Alok Gupta. "To our surprise, he did well. This led to an invitation to qualify for a team to represent the U.S.A. at the PMW Contest in Hong Kong."

This time, Akash did a little bit more preparation, earning a place as one of the four members on the U.S. team. "Since then, he has been preparing much harder for the Hong Kong contest," added Gupta, noting that they left July 13 for competitions that begin the week of July 18.

Gupta holds engineering and business degrees, but doesn't consider himself a "math whiz," although "I think I am pretty good at math and do enjoy the subject. I had not pushed Akash toward math in any particular way in the past," continued Gupta. Lately, however, he has been trying to support Akash in his efforts to prepare for the contest.

Each country sends a team consisting of a leader, a deputy leader and no more than four contestants. The U.S. team will be led by Ewa Garg.

Garg has been active as a head coach for competitive math in Silicon Valley with an accomplished track record in leading many teams and students into various math competitions at the regional, state and national levels, including Mathcounts, American Mathematical Competitions, Math Olympiads for Elementary and Middle Schools and the Harker Invitational.

To prepare for the Hong Kong competition, the four students have been undergoing intense training with Garg, focusing on mathematical problem solving strategies and skills.



*Evergreen's Akash Gupta is one of only four middle school students in the country representing the United States in the ninth annual Primary Mathematics World Contest in Hong Kong this month.*

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**The competition**

Akash, who will be entering eighth grade at Chaboya Middle School in the fall, says he is "both excited and nervous about the competition." Although he has been to India on several occasions for vacation and to visit relatives, he's very excited about visiting Hong Kong and China, areas he has only read about.

He's also nervous because he knows the contest has historically been dominated largely by Asian teams representing China, Japan and India, so he feels some pressure knowing that his family origin is also from Asia.

According to Gupta, all the teams compete by concurrently taking time-limited written tests. There will be both team and individual contests. The winners are selected based on the highest correct scores, and again, there will be rankings based on team effort as well as on an individual basis.

"I have looked at samples of the tests from the past, and in my judgment, they would definitely be considered difficult, even for most college-educated adults," Gupta said. Considering that the contest is for kids 13 and younger, he feels that they will have their work cut out for them.

The tests consist of a variety of thinking problems involving skills from geometry, probability and algebra, but ultimately call for good, solid reasoning ability to find the answer based on the limited "clues" provided in the problem. Gupta noted that only the correct answer counts; no partial credit is given for the actual work or reasoning.

Is he ready? At this point, Akash just wants to get on with it and be done with the suspense—partly because he is dying to get his hands on the fifth Harry Potter book of the series being released when he is in Hong Kong.

"He doesn't relish the fact that he has to hold off for a few days to stay focused on the contest," added Gupta.

*The Primary Mathematics World Contest is intended to provide an opportunity for information exchange of primary school mathematics education throughout the world. It's also intended to foster friendly relations among primary school students from different countries and discover the mathematics potential of gifted primary students among different countries.*

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