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Young Author on a Writing Roll

By Lian Walden



Featured author Madeleine Singh, 12, speaks to students at Burton Valley Elementary School during a recent book fair. Photo provided

At age 12 (yes, 12!) with two novels under her belt, aspiring author Madeleine Singh is a young literary force to be reckoned with. She wrote her first novel, “Snowflakes in Paradise,” when she was 11 years old. Writing in between swim practice and camp, Singh says the book took her “the entire summer.”

“Snowflakes in Paradise” is about a girl who goes to Mexico, where it snows on her golden birthday, that extra special day when someone turns the age of her birth date. In the novel, the protagonist turns 11 on the 11th.

Singh wrote her second novel, “Solarman” over the course of a few

months. This story, inspired by her swim team’s mascot, is about the legend of Solarman, who falls from the sun to the earth and makes a hole upon impact, thus creating a swimming pool. Singh found the legend intriguing, particularly because of what it leaves out. She developed the short legend into a full-length novel.

Writing “Solarman” was easier than writing her first novel, she says, because the story was already laid out for her. However, what Singh finds most exciting about writing is getting to control the events. Reading is her favorite hobby, but sometimes she reads and wishes the plot would turn

out differently. “As an author, I get to influence the story,” she says.

A former Burton Valley Elementary student, the Stanley Middle School sixth-grader gave copies of her books to her former teachers, and was asked by the teachers and the PTA to be a featured author at the Burton Valley Elementary Book Fair. She recently spoke at an assembly and read a couple chapters from “Snowflakes in Paradise” to all the third- and fourth-grade classes.

Singh started writing in the fourth grade, after a teacher gave her a creative writing assignment; when asked to write only a few pages, she would write over 20. Interestingly, writing is one of her least favorite subjects, even though she loves to write outside of the classroom.

“In school they make us write the same thing over and over, rewriting rough drafts, instead of writing how we want,” she says. Singh prefers her physical education and art classes. In addition to being a burgeoning author, she is an athlete and an artist. She designed the covers for both her books, which were self-published, and even designed and created her own website.

Singh and her parents are currently editing her third novel, “Pals with Paws,” about a make believe city where unwanted stray dogs are put up for adoption.

To learn more about Singh and her books, visit www.madeleinesingh.com.

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WHAT: Make the Magic Dinner and Silent Auction

WHEN: Saturday April 27, 6pm

WHERE: Moraga Country Club (1600 St. Andrews Dr)

Make the Magic is our single largest annual fundraiser. The evening will start off with a silent auction and an award winning catered dinner. Campers and counselors will then share how Camp Kesem has changed their lives. We will close the night with a dessert live auction and an open dance floor.

To purchase a ticket and reserve your spot go to: <http://campkesem.org/UCBMTM2013>

Questions/comments please contact Kristen Curry at special.events@campkesemberkeley.org.

School Garden Cultivates Learning from the Ground Up

... continued from page B1



Some of the Green Team volunteer moms pictured at the Springhill Garden, from left: Julie Roberts, Mandy Hughes, Nanette Heffernan, Kathy Hemmenway, Meg McAdam and Kendra Loveless. Photo Cathy Tyson

It took a village to get the garden off the ground, and continues to take an army of volunteers to keep it running. Friend of a friend Kelly Bradley helped with the installation of the Burton Valley school garden, and was brought in to assist the staff and parent volunteers with the garden set up, projects and maintenance. Credit parent volunteers who donate time on upkeep and organization, along with supportive school administration and teachers who have embraced the many learning opportunities the garden presents for helping this garden grow.

Green Team volunteers complimented Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and a number of Eagle Scout projects for additions like the very sturdy composting bins, butterfly garden and hand washing station. The garden keeps on giving even after the regular school year; over the summer, families can adopt one of the raised

beds to water and manage. Springhill Principal Heather Duncan credits the Parent Faculty Club, and adult Green Team volunteers who are dedicated to getting the garden off the ground. “They’ve been incredibly supportive.” That, coupled with hiring a professional outdoor classroom aide to coordinate with teachers and volunteers to bring rigor and excitement, delivers an important lesson of sustainability to the community, said Duncan. The garden has been so successful, that it was chosen by the Contra Costa County Master Gardeners as one of a handful of teaching gardens for other schools that would like to start a similar project.

To raise awareness and money for the garden, Springhill Elementary School’s Green Team will hold a plant sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, April 14 on the lower playground of campus at 3301 Springhill

Road, Lafayette. Spring starter plants will be on sale to raise money to benefit the garden. Tomatoes, eggplant, squash, melons, herbs, peppers and more – some planted as seeds by Springhill students – will be supplemented with plants and gardening supplies from Mt. Diablo Nursery.

Parent volunteer Kendra Loveless put together a website for online ordering, which will accept orders through April 1 at greenteamplantsale.gostorego.com. Plants that are pre-purchased can be picked up at the plant sale. There are a limited number of “Springhill grown” plants, so early orders are encouraged. In addition to plants for sale, there will be gardening activities and tips from master gardeners and refreshments provided by Pancoast Pizza. All proceeds will support the school garden learning center and Springhill’s Green Team program.

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