

Mother's Day Marked By Persian Dance Recital in Santa Clara

By Pantea Izadi **CSU Pioneer May, 2008**
Staff Writer

The Bay Area Iranian American community celebrated Mother's Day with a major benefit concert featuring an elegant performance by the Niosha Dance Academy dancers.

The Santa Clara Convention Center was packed for the May 11 dance recital. All proceeds generated from that performance will go to cancer research and programs to assist children with cancer.

Niosha Nafei Jamali, the founder and lead instructor of the Niosha Dance Academy who is married and has three children, is herself a survivor of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, a form of cancer that affects the lymphatic system. Over the years, she has held many charity events to help the Cancer Research Society.

During the performance, Nafei took the opportunity to thank her family, friends,

instructors and students for helping her put together the event.

Of her student dancers, she said: "I am so proud of each and every one of you for the hard work you put into your art, your love and passion and I am so thrilled I was able to transfer my love and passion to you."

"All I hear from people and e-mails I receive is how wonderful you girls are," she said.

Nafei was born in Tehran, Iran and began dancing when she was five-years-old. She started her own dance academy in 1991, teaching adults and children the traditional and modern Persian styles of dances.

Nafei, who has a degree in psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz, was also crowned Miss Iran and won first place in a talent and beauty pageant in 1992.

"I was so happy to be part of this great event for such a special occasion," said Sheila Torabi, an attendee. "I thought the event was a great success."

Mahsa Salimi, 32, a computer engineer from Walnut Creek, agreed completely.

"It was a great idea to celebrate Mother's Day with the Niosha Dance Academy Mother's Day show," Salimi said. "I thought that was the best Mother's Day gift for all."

Others were equally enthusiastic.

"I thought the show was great," said Ali Moazemi, 40, a chemical engineer from San Francisco. "The Niosha dancers performed gracefully while folk dancing with their different costumes for each dance. Each dance reflected a specific region in Iran such as the Bandari Dance, which originated in the southern part of Iran. The Niosha dancers perform at almost every multi cultural event."

Morvarid Behdari, 50, an attendee from Saratoga, said, "Not only were the donations for a good cause, but I also thought her show was about celebrating and appreciating our own healthy life and cherishing good moments with our families and friends on this special day."



Mother's Day Show: A variety of performances by Niosha Dance Academy dancers were featured in a charity concert benefitting cancer programs and research.

Photo Courtesy/Niosha Nafei Jamali