

Thanksgiving in Evergreen: More than a holiday

Celebrating Community, Gratitude, and Flavor

By Matt Frazier
Times Media columnist

Thanksgiving in Evergreen Valley is more than just a holiday; it's a vibrant celebration that embodies the spirit of community, gratitude, and togetherness.

As the leaves morph into stunning shades of red and gold and the air takes on a crispness, the valley transforms into a picturesque setting ideal for this festive occasion.

Residents and visitors alike discover countless ways to revel in this season of thanks, participating in activities and dining options that cater to diverse tastes and preferences.

Local events play a significant role in bringing the community together. Festivities abound, from parades featuring elaborate floats and spirited marching bands to pie-eating contests and craft fairs, all capturing the essence of Thanksgiving. These community gatherings provide an excellent

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Update on winter flood preparedness presented at joint news conference held November 19

By William Bellou
Publisher

Valley Water recently held a joint news conference on winter flood preparedness on November 19.

The event, held in partnership with the County of Santa Clara, the City of San José, and the National Weather Service, highlighted regional efforts to prepare for the upcoming winter season.

The news conference on winter flood preparedness highlighted regional coordination, the use of advanced monitoring technology, and community readiness.

Key messages from representatives of Valley Water, Santa Clara County, the City of San José, and the National Weather Service emphasized collaboration, tracking storms with command centers and drones, and urging residents to prepare for unpredictable weather by creating emergency plans and heeding warnings.

Adopt-a-Storm Drain pilot program

The Environmental Services Department's Watershed Protection Division is leading this volunteer effort to educate and empower communities to take part in reducing water pollution - because



Members of the news media asked questions of officials regarding regional efforts to prepare for the winter season, including the new Adopt-a-Storm Drain pilot program. Pictured (L to r) are **Richard Santos**, Valley Water Board Vice-Chair; Valley Water CEO **Melanie Richardson**, CEO Valley Water, **Brian Garcia**, Warning Coordination Meteorologist for the National Weather Service (SF Bay Area); San Jose Mayor **Matt Mahan**; and **Tom Chin**, Deputy Director of Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Management. *Photo courtesy of Valley Water.*

only rain should go down the storm drain.
View the map in full screen at the

Adopt-a-Storm Drain GIS Map page
<https://tinyurl.com/pz8wf24n>
See PREPAREDNESS, page 10

Santa Clara County assessor candidates head to runoff election

By Keith Menconi
San José Spotlight

With all the votes counted in the race for Santa Clara County assessor, the contest is headed for a December runoff between Los Altos Vice Mayor Neysa Fligor and former Saratoga Councilmember Rishi Kumar.

Saratoga Councilmember Yan Zhao and East Side Union High School District Board Member Bryan Do placed third and fourth place, respectively.

The two runoff candidates agree big changes are needed at the Santa Clara County Assessor's Office, including the completion of an ongoing tech modernization and reform measures



Neysa Fligor (left) and **Rishi Kumar** are headed to a Dec. 30 runoff for Santa Clara County assessor.



to reduce assessment and appeals times.

But each also maintains their own background is best suited to carry out those reforms.

"I will be the first to tell you that there are things that need to be improved," Fligor, an employee in the assessor's office, told San José Spotlight. "But I also bring a fresh perspective, and when I see that change needs to be made, I'm the first one to say, let's figure out how to do this and do it well."

Since July, Fligor has been serving as assistant assessor for the agency, helping to

See CANDIDATES, page 8

Make the nice list — donate blood this holiday season!

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

It's the season of giving, and there's no better gift than life-saving blood donations.

Throughout November, all Stanford Blood Center donors will receive a festive, collectible long-sleeve "Ugly Sweater" t-shirt, just in time for the winter celebrations.

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San Jose opens tiny home village on Valley Water land

By Joyce Chu
San José Spotlight

A long-awaited San Jose tiny home village built on land owned by the region's largest water supplier has opened — giving 136 homeless people a roof over their heads.

The tiny homes on Cherry Avenue cost \$18.3 million to build and include central laundry, private bathrooms and an outdoor picnic area. Nonprofit HomeFirst will provide case management to help people transition into permanent housing. Security and meals will also be provided. The city is leasing Valley Water's land until Dec. 31, 2035, with an option for a five-year extension.

San Jose Vice Mayor Pam Foley, whose District 9 covers this site, said her district previously hasn't been part of the solution to end homelessness because there's not much available land to build on.

"But this property and the partnership with Valley Water shows



The Cherry Avenue tiny home village will give 136 homeless people a safe place to live. It has central laundry, private bathrooms and an outdoor picnic area. Photo by Joyce Chu.

that there really are opportunities," Foley said at a news conference held at the grand opening on Monday. "This community... reflects our belief that every person deserves a chance to rebuild their lives."

The tiny homes have been funded with about \$9 million from Measure E, a property transfer tax approved by city voters in 2020. San Jose also received more than \$2.5 million in philanthropic donations. Developer DignityMoves received up to \$15 million to design and construct the site. The city has allocated \$3.3 million for operating costs from Oct. 1 to June 30, 2026.

Dozens of homeless people previously lived on the land, which sits across from Hampton Inn and other major businesses and homes. The

city cleared the camps where the site sits by January and Valley Water established a no encampment zone to prevent people from returning. People who camp on the property can be charged with an infraction or fined under the water agency's policy.

The genesis of the Cherry Avenue project began in 2022, when the Valley Water board directed employees to look for ways to address homeless people living on agency land. Valley Water partnered with San Jose on a plan for its Cherry Avenue property, and in June 2023 the City Council approved temporary housing on the site — with the intention to move homeless people living there into the future tiny homes.

"I urge all government institu-

tions to consider this dynamic inter-governmental relationship," Jim Beall, District 4 director on the Valley Water board and former state lawmaker, said at the grand opening. "We end up with a lot more (housing) projects when that happens."

The Cherry Avenue tiny home village is the 11th temporary housing site to open in San Jose this year. Tiny homes on Branham Lane opened in February. Then came the Berryessa safe parking site, Via del Oro tiny homes, Taylor Street safe sleeping site, five motels converted to homeless shelters and the expansion of Rue Ferrari last month. One more site is scheduled to open this year, the Cerone tiny homes.

Once that is finished, San Jose will have added nearly 1,240 spaces for homeless people to stay — nearly tripling the city's capacity from last year, according to city data.

At the Cherry Avenue grand opening, Mayor Matt Mahan emphasized the city is upholding its promise to bring 1,000 beds online by the end of the year.

"Exactly 300 days ago, we stood in the same spot and broke ground on the community we see before you here today," Mahan said. "I shared the results that were proving that this

See *TINY HOMES*, next page

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Times **Local News**

Gearing up for the holiday season

By **Bill Schroh, Jr.**
President & CEO
History San José

Happy November everyone! As we gear up for this Holiday season, I am on an emotional roller coaster! October began with the high of History San José hosting our Annual Valley of Heart's Delight Fundraiser which not only raises funds for the museum but is also a celebration of the history and culture of San Jose.

More than 200 people joined us under the Light Tower of History Park as we celebrated three San Jose luminaries, San José Jazz Executive Director Brendan Rawson and Community Engagement Leaders Marianne and Carl Salas for their incredible work both onstage and behind the scenes helping to create the fellowship and community in San Jose we all strive for and love! During the event I shared some exciting news about the Sakauye Farmhouse, and I am happy to finally be able to share it with all of you!

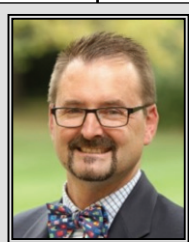
In partnership with San Jose City Councilmember Rosemary Kamei, the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, and the Preservation Action Council San Jose, I am thrilled to announce that we have reached our first fundraising milestone to be able to move the Sakauye Farmhouse to History Park! The house is no longer in danger of being demolished, yet there still is much work to be done once the Sakauye Farmhouse has arrived at History Park! Now the second phase of fundraising begins for the restoration of the Farmhouse. Please sup-

port our restoration efforts so that we can prepare the home for use as a gallery, event space, and classroom. I will keep you informed on the progress of the move!

San José Roots took place on November 1st at San Pedro Square Market with thanks to our sponsors, the San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs, Betty Duong, and StarOne Credit Union. Once again History San José, along with our community partners at Mosaic America and many more, hosted tours of our historic downtown buildings, cultural performances, poetry readings, and community booths that highlighted the vibrant cultural heritage of our city. During this festival we incorporate as many different traditions as possible to show how diverse our shared community really is. This blending of cultures has made us the amazing region we are today.

In contrast to the highs of our many fall events, the month is ending with seeing the senseless injury of one of the most important symbols of the United States: the White House. Seeing the East Wing of the White House destroyed without the historic preservation community's involvement makes me stop and think, what might be next? This will only make me work harder to make sure something like this does not happen in San Jose without the historic preservation community's input!

Our history and heritage needs to be preserved, protected, and celebrated, not erased, distorted, or destroyed! The History San José Team will continue the fight to save and preserve important historic buildings in San Jose and the Santa Clara Valley. One of the key pillars of History San José is the preservation of historic buildings, and as many of you know, it's one of the reasons History Park was created! I hope you will join us to support this worthy cause.



History San José
Bill Schroh, Jr.
President & CEO

Tiny homes

Continued from previous page
approach was starting to work. I told you that San Jose had seen a 10% drop in unsheltered homelessness, while the rest of the state saw a 10% rise."

San Jose has 6,503 homeless residents. Unsheltered homelessness in San Jose has dropped more than 1,000 people since 2022. Roughly 3,959 homeless residents are unsheltered, or about 60%, and 2,544 are sheltered, according to the latest point in time count con-

ducted in January before the 11 sites opened. Still, the city has experienced a slight increase in its homeless population, up 237 people, from the last count in 2023.

San Jose is working to bring unsheltered homelessness down to 50% and reach "functional zero" — when the number of people exiting homelessness is greater than the number of people becoming homeless.

"If we stay determined to end the crisis on our streets, this city really is going to do it," DignityMoves CEO Elizabeth Funk said at the grand opening. "I'm proud to be a part of it."



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San Jose Dance Theatre announces community guest artists for 60th anniversary 'Chimney Sweep' cameo roles in The Original San José Nutcracker

In celebration of the 60th Anniversary of The Original San José Nutcracker, San Jose Dance Theatre is delighted to introduce a special new tradition: Guest Community Chimney Sweeps, featuring notable local leaders and beloved public figures in cameo appearances throughout Nutcracker weekend.

Traditionally, chimney sweeps have long been considered symbols of good fortune — folklore says that shaking a chimney sweep’s hand brings luck for the year ahead. In this milestone production, each guest will bring their own magic, personality, and San José spirit to this whimsical role, honoring both the past and future of this beloved holiday production.

“This is such a joyful way to honor our community while celebrating 60 years of Nutcracker magic in San José,” says Elizabeth Sweeney, Executive Director of San Jose Dance Theatre. “Each guest sweep embodies the collaborative, community-centered heart of SJDT.”

San Jose Dance Theatre is proud to welcome the following guest chimney sweeps:

- Guest Chimney Sweep Appearances
- December 13, 2:00 PM: Viscount Michael North – San Jose Restaurateur
- December 13, 7:30 PM: Elizabeth Sweeney – SJDT Alumna & Executive Director
- December 14, 2:00 PM: Ron Murietta – Arts Industry Support Director, San Jose Office of Economic Development & Cultural Affairs
- December 20, 2:00 PM: Shan Berries – Radio Host at Mix 106.5, Founder of Shades By Shan Cosmetics & The MamaBerries Foundation
- December 20, 7:30 PM: Holly Barr – Realtor & Founder of Wil-low Glen Charm
- December 21, 2:00 PM: Matt Mahan – Mayor of San José

Each guest artist will appear live on stage in their scheduled performance, contributing to the joy, humor, and theatrical sparkle of this long-standing holiday tradition.

This special addition is part of San Jose Dance Theatre’s ongoing



The Original San José Nutcracker, San Jose Dance Theatre is introducing a special new tradition: Guest Community Chimney Sweeps, featuring notable local leaders and beloved public figures in cameo appearances at Nutcracker weekend performances. Among those appearing this year are (left to right) **Elizabeth Sweeney**, Executive Director of San Jose Dance Theatre; **Nicole Haskins**, Artistic Director of San Jose Dance Theatre, San Jose Mayor **Matt Mahan**, and **John Torrey**, Board President of San Jose Dance Theatre.

celebration of its Diamond Jubilee year, honoring the generations of dancers, families, and local supporters who have made The Original San José Nutcracker a cherished cultural landmark for six decades.

About San Jose Dance Theatre

Founded in 1964, San Jose Dance Theatre is a premier nonprofit arts organization dedicated to excellence in dance training, performance, and community enrichment. For 60 years, SJDT has brought the magic of The Nutcracker to Silicon Valley and provided world-class ballet education to young dancers across the region.

VTA Awards \$750,000 to advance transit access, community resilience, and engagement across Santa Clara County

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) announced more than \$750,000 in grant funding to support projects that improve access to public transit, strengthen community resilience, expand inclusive engagement, and celebrate community identity across Santa Clara County.

These investments, going to 14 recipients in four different categories, help cities and nonprofits advance equitable, transit-oriented communities (TOCs) that connect residents to opportunity while promoting cultural vibrancy and sustainability.

This is the second year VTA has awarded these grants to various organizations and cities in Santa Clara County. The award presentation was held at the San Jose Museum of Art on Nov. 12.

Program Area A: Transit Access and Circulation Planning (\$350,000)

Program Area B: Community Resilience – Total Funding: \$200,000

Program Area C: Education and Engagement – Total Funding: \$100,000

Program Area D: Placemaking and Cultural Activation – Total Funding: \$100,000

Together, these projects share a regional commitment to building equitable, connected, and culturally vibrant transit-oriented communities across Santa Clara County according to VTA officials.



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OSC has opened a new program for women based upon equine interaction and equine-assisted-learning, designed to develop self-awareness and self-acceptance, confidence and resilience, and safe boundaries.

G.R.I.T. is for adult women led by OSC founder Landa Keirstead. The small group meets in 2 hour sessions, once per week for six-weeks

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Candidates

Continued from page 1

oversee the office of 250 workers and its \$55 million budget. She first joined the assessor's office in 2024 as a special assistant to the assessor.

In contrast, Kumar has a background as a Silicon Valley tech executive. In the assessor's race, he has positioned himself as a tax hawk with the technical and managerial chops to lead the assessor's office in a new direction.

"We need somebody who is a reformist, somebody who's not an insider, and can reorient the assessor's office to make it work for the people," Kumar told San José Spotlight.

The race was sparked over the summer by the retirement of longtime County Assessor Larry Stone, who held the role for 30 years. The winner will finish out Stone's term through the end of 2026, but will then need to run again for a full four-year term.

Whoever emerges victorious will take the helm of an office responsible for assessing the property values that make up the county's more than \$700 billion real estate and business property rolls. Such assessments have profound implications for property owners as well as the county's prospects for gathering property tax revenue.

Fligor has secured Stone's endorsement, along with a bevy of South Bay establishment politicians, including Congressmember Sam Liccardo, Assemblymember Marc Berman and District 4 County Supervisor

Susan Ellenberg. Kumar has racked up endorsements from local elected officials, including former Assemblymembers Kansen Chu and Nora Campos, as well as Cupertino Mayor Liang Fang.

Fligor's vote lead is matched by an even larger funding advantage. So far, she has raised more than \$298,000 through donations and loans, according to recent campaign filings. Kumar has raised roughly \$22,000. He said he has turned down some donations from special interest groups to maintain his campaign's independence.

Fligor — a lawyer who previously worked for both HP and Santa Clara County — has criticized Kumar's credentials, pointing out that, unlike her, he lacks an official certification as a property tax appraiser. All California assessors are required by law to obtain the state-issued certification within one year of taking office.

"It demonstrates that I already know the work in the office," Fligor said. "I'll be able to hit the ground running on day one."

Kumar said he wouldn't have trouble obtaining the certification. Regardless, Kumar made the case that his own experience is best suited for the challenges presently facing the assessor's office. In particular, he argues his years of experience in the tech sector as a C-suite executive have given him the right mix of skills to shepherd forward the intricate process of transferring the assessor's office onto a new computer system. The long-awaited modernization project got underway after the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors approved the purchase of the new system in June.

"We need somebody who understands modernization," he said. "When I was part of IBM, we did modernization. I was a hands on guy ... I was living and breathing that world for almost 10 years."

During the campaign, Kumar has also highlighted his various efforts to block fee and tax hikes over the course of his career in local government. Most recently that has included the No on Measure A Tax Committee, which Kumar chaired. Santa Clara County voters on Nov. 4 passed Measure A — a five-eighth cent sales tax increase intended to fill a major federal funding gap — with 57% of tallied votes cast in its favor.

Kumar has attempted to carry his tax-skeptical politics into his platform for assessor as well. His signature campaign initiative is a plan to sponsor a state ballot measure to completely eliminate property taxes for many homeowners aged 60 and over.

The plan has sparked considerable pushback. Fligor calls this campaign strategy "irresponsible," noting the county assessor has no direct authority to set tax policy. But Kumar argues the assessor's prominent role in local politics offers a prime opportunity to push for the reform.

While Fligor's vote lead in the November election is formidable, the runoff campaign remains competitive, Melinda Jackson, a San Jose State University political science professor, said.

"A county assessor race does not get a lot of attention," Jackson said. "It will be starting fresh with a new electorate in December."

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Excerpts for a younger audience

Times Local News

BookSmart —
Bringing a beloved
community bookstore
to Evergreen's
Eastridge Center

By Sean Eastwood
Times staff writer

The beloved independent bookstore BookSmart is bringing its signature warmth, curiosity, and community spirit to Eastridge Center in Evergreen Valley. After 30 years of serving the South Valley community, beloved independent bookstore BookSmart is bringing its signature warmth, curiosity, and community spirit to Eastridge Center in Evergreen Valley. The new location, BookSmart Eastridge, officially opens its doors this month, reintroducing something the area has been missing for far too long—a neighborhood bookstore. For decades, owners Brad Jones and Cinda Meister have made BookSmart a cornerstone of Morgan Hill’s cultural and civic life—hosting author visits, promoting literacy, supporting teachers, and giving back through programs like the Gift of Reading. Now, they’re thrilled to share that same commitment with another community. “Eastridge has such a deep connection to local culture,” says co-owner Cinda Meister, “and we’re excited to be part of that story—bringing a place where people can



browse, discover, and connect.” BookSmart Eastridge offers a thoughtfully curated selection of books for all ages, from bestsellers to children’s favorites and hidden gems. Customers can also special-order any title, ensuring every reader finds the perfect book. In addition to books, the store features gifts, puzzles, calendars, educational toys, greeting cards, and whimsical book-lover treasures—from bookmarks to book-themed socks and mugs. True to BookSmart’s roots, the new location also hires primarily from the local neighborhood, offers discounts for teachers, and plans to host community events, including visits from local authors, literacy drives, and creative workshops. BookSmart can be found at Suite 256, on the upper level of the mall between J.C. Penney and Macy’s. BookSmart invites East San Jose families, educators, and readers to stop by, browse, and experience the joy of an independent bookstore once again. For more about BookSmart’s history and mission, visit mybooksmart.indielite.org/about-us.

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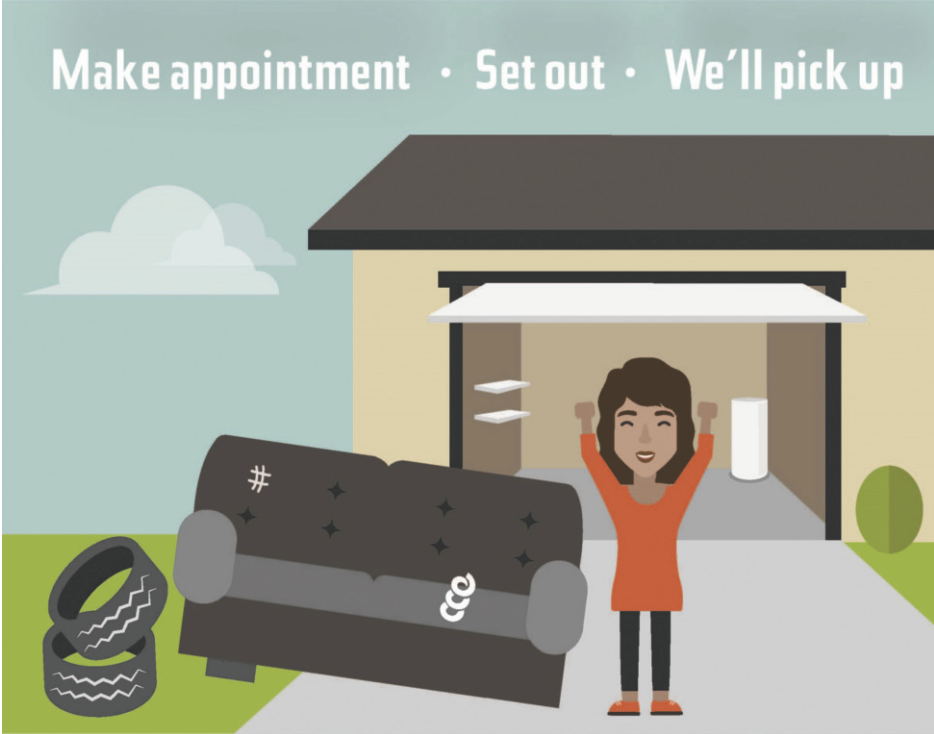
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Times **News**

Preparedness

Continued from page 1

If you have questions or concerns or notice any discrepancies between the map's data and the storm drains on your street, please contact the City at WSPInbox@sanjoseca.gov, or call 408-945-3000.

The weather outlook presented at the news conference by Tom Chin, Deputy Director of Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Management, highlighted the significant influence of a developing La Niña pattern this winter, which typically leads to drier-than-average conditions for Southern California and the southern tier of the U.S., but greater uncertainty for Northern and Central California.

Key points from the forecast included:

- **La Niña Conditions:** La Niña conditions have officially emerged and are favored to persist through the winter months (December 2025 - February 2026), likely transitioning to a neutral phase by early spring 2026.

- **Precipitation Outlook:** The typical La Niña pattern suggests a higher likelihood of drier-than-normal conditions across California and the Southwest. However, forecasts for Northern and Central California, including Santa Clara County, have low confidence and show equal chances of below-average, near-average, or above-average precipitation.

- **Current Conditions:** Despite the seasonal outlook for drier conditions, recent storms have led to a strong start to the water year, with some areas tripling their normal rainfall amounts through mid-November.

Officials stressed that California is prone to "extreme shifts from droughts to floods" and that potential flood flows on rivers could increase due to a greater frequency of mois-

ture-heavy storms. Valley Water and its partners monitor conditions in real-time and are prepared to open their emergency operations center during storm events.

Thanksgiving

Continued from page 1

opportunity for families to bond, meet neighbors, and share the joys of the season.

Thanksgiving is synonymous with food, and Evergreen Valley does not disappoint in this arena. The valley is well-known for its diverse culinary scene, with numerous restaurants offering delightful Thanksgiving menus that celebrate traditional fare with a local twist.

For smaller gatherings or intimate celebrations, Costco's prepared meals offer a fantastic choice. With a variety of delicious options available, picking up one of their pre-prepared meals saves time while ensuring a high-quality dish. It's perfect for those who want a holiday meal without the hassle of cooking from scratch. Another convenient option is Cracker Barrel, famous for its "Heat n' Serve" Thanksgiving dishes. This selection allows you to pick up a complete meal, ready to be reheated at home—ideal for busy individuals who still want a home-cooked feel without the all-day kitchen commitment.

Whether dining out, hosting at home, or participating in local festivities, there's a little something for everyone this holiday season. As the community gathers to celebrate, it's a reminder of what this cherished holiday is truly about. So, gather your loved ones, savor the season's flavors, and create unforgettable memories of this Thanksgiving in Evergreen Valley.

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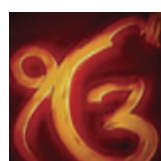


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"teacher" or "enlighten-
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tionship of teaching
and learning. Sikhism
is monotheistic and
stresses the equality of
all men and women.
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God (praying), earning
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