

Diwali Parade attracts thousands in Queens

By RAMESH DEOCHAND

Thousands joined the annual Diwali Motorcade/Parade which was held last Saturday, October 14, 2017 on Liberty Avenue, Richmond Hill, Queens.

The spectacular Diwali Motorcade/Parade which has become a much anticipated major cultural event within the Indo-Caribbean community in Queens, brought people, numbering well over 10,000, together as they revel in the excitement and spiritual fervour of this major Hindu festival.

Free hot food was distributed to thousands of

people who joined the celebrations. The Festival of Light celebration attracted several amazing and gorgeously decorated floats, aglow with myriads of lights and colours, that glinted on a sea of beaming faces invoking an atmosphere of exotic beauty and spiritual joy. Exquisitely attired young beauties graced the floats depicting the forms of the Divine Mother Lakshmi, and they mesmerize the crowd with their angelic dispositions.

With massive crowds lining the sidewalks of the Avenue and thousands more marching along with their banners and colour-

ful floats to the rhythm of soulful melodies, this time extolling the divinity of Mother Lakshmi and Lord Rama, deities at the center of the festivities.

The cultural program showcased some of the best and brightest talent among our young people in the field of song and dance. Artists included: Natraj Center For Performing Arts, Pratima Kushmanie Doobay, Damian Sookram, Sanasani Cultural Organization, Shivanie Persaud, Sarvesh Shivnauth, Shelly Ramanan, Madrassi Organization, Boywah Sisters from Shri Krishna

Mandir, David Ali Dance Group, Rick Ramdehal and Shiva Lakkan.

The celebration commenced with a sanctifying Havan ceremony in the early afternoon officiated by Pdt. Ravi Maharaj of the Queens Hindu Mandir and Pdt. Bharat Singh of The Arya Spiritual Center followed by the much anticipated Diwali Motorcade/Parade that kicked off from the Arya Spiritual Center grounds. It traveled through the heart of Liberty Avenue, much to the amazement of eager spectators, and finally returned towards Arya Spiritual Grounds where the 16 floats were judged in front of Sybil's Bakery and Restaurant one of the main sponsors of this event.

Winners of the various

categories were judged on a predetermined set of criteria related to illumination, creativity, beauty, craftsmanship, appearance, and music. The five celebrity judges were Bindu Kohli, Hema Augustus, Nadia Neubert, Roxanne Seunarine and Sheena Balgobin.

This part was hosted by TV personality Imran Ahmad with sound provided by DJ Frontline Soundz. The top winners were: Sri Durga Mandir -1st, Sanasani Cultural Organization -2nd, Balesar Family -3rd, Sri Sri Krishna Balarama Mandir-4th and Shiv Kala Dance Academy- 5th.

A representative from Mayor Bill De Blasio's office; Mr. Nick Gulatta honoured Dr. Dhanpaul with a special citation. Also

Mr. Danil Singh honoured him with a citation from State Senator Roxanne Persaud's office.

The almost flawless event couldn't have been possible without the support of sponsors such as Star Party Rental which provided all the stage, tents, chairs and the LED Screen, Triple Crown also sponsored a choice of a car or \$10k to a lucky winner, (Heema Kanhai) Dreams by Dev our decorator, TD BANK, Bedessee, Digicel, Sybils and My Indian Nursing Home.

Lakshmee Singh was also commended for her outstanding leadership and dedication along with her exceptional team that worked tirelessly to pull off an event of such magnitude. (Photos by Lakshmee Singh)

