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IRVINE COUPLE HONORED AS DISTINGUISHED CITIZENS BY THE CITY FOR CULTURAL CONTRIBUTIONS**Irvine CA:**

The City of Irvine recognized **Ramya Harishankar and Harish Murthy** as '*Distinguished Citizens*' and placed their names on a '*Wall of Recognition*' created for such honorees at the Bill Barber Memorial Park in Irvine. Established in 2006, the Wall recognizes individuals, groups, organizations, and businesses who have made significant contributions to the community. Since its inception, about 400 individuals and organizations have been honored on the wall. Ramya Harishankar and Harish Murthy came to the city in 1981 from Chennai (India) and have been full time residents since 1982. Their contributions individually and collectively have contributed to and enhanced the cultural landscape of the city.

Ramya Harishankar established the Arpana School of Dance in 1982, just completing 40 years of teaching, producing, and presenting traditional Indian dance in the city and beyond. A 2-time National Endowment for the Arts Choreographic Fellow, Harishankar is also the recipient of the Helena Modjeska Cultural Legacy Award (2007) from Arts OC, the Countywide Arts agency. She has toured solo and with her Company worldwide, many of them raising funds, over \$100000, for significant charities such as the Red Cross, American Cancer Society, Pediatric Aids, and the Rotary Foundation. In 1989, she co-founded the Arpana Foundation which morphed into the Ektaa Center in 2004, a premier cultural organization in Irvine and Orange County.

Harish Murthy's philanthropic and community service contributions started early in his career with the **Multicultural Arts Council of Orange County**, as a Board Member spearheading the 'Kaleidoscope Festival' in 1989, an early model for many multi-cultural festivals celebrating the diversity of the community. Trading his corporate and business endeavors to a life of philanthropy and volunteerism since the early 2000's, he has dedicated his support largely for cultural, civic and community affairs in Irvine. Over the last 2 decades, the **Ektaa Center**, which he co-founded with Harishankar, has evolved as one of the premier cultural organizations in Orange County and the de facto community arts and culture Center for the Indian diaspora. More recently, he was appointed to the Board of **Arts OC**, the countywide arts agency. Active and involved in civic matters, Murthy served on the **Senior Citizens Council of the City of Irvine**. As a **Rotarian** of over 2 decades, he served as President of the **Rotary Club of Irvine** in 2020-21, and he continues to work in the betterment of communities both locally and globally. "I have and continue to be committed to the community in myriad ways with a passion to build peace and goodwill for the future" says Murthy.

The two of them were recognized at a special event during the regular meeting of the City Council on Tuesday June 14, 2022.

For more details email harish@indoamericanarts.com or call (949) 300-8912