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## ife if

powerful..."

## Foundation linked to Lady Gaga promotes acts of kindness in local communities

**By Diane Claytor** 



Springhill Elementary Kindness co-chairs, Maya Smith (left) and Kelly Fleming kick off the Born This Way Foundation's BeKind21 campaign this past August. Photo provided

Enista Smith was eagerly looking forward to beginning her col- to LA. lege days as a freshman at New came down and the world changed. Instead of attending classes, Smith and her new college friends went to Center attacks.

Smith had always had a deep belief in America but after 9/11, "it all just felt so confusing and frail." Her parents chose this country, giving up everything in their native Romania to seek political asylum visory board so together we could in the United States. "I grew up create this amazing organization," with a strong appreciation for what Smith said. this country had given my parents so many opportunities and the ability to rebuild their lives and live the cruelty growing up "because she American dream," she stated. career choices she had previously decided, from an early age, that if gravitated toward - communications or fashion design; she now would use her time, talents and wanted to find work where she energy to make sure that young could contribute to making the people thrived." And from this pasworld a better place. activism and quickly found Rock then leading its operations. For the the Vote, a nonpartisan, nonprofit past two years, she has served as organization dedicated to building the foundation's executive directhe political power of young peo- tor. "We work in two main areas ple. This became the first step in that really go hand in hand," she her role as both an activist and passionate supporter of young people wellness." and all they can accomplish. It was also through Rock the Vote that foundation and is certainly not just she met her husband, David, "this a figurehead, Smith reported. She dreamy California boy from UC Berkeley." A stint working for mobilize. org, an organization founded by David Smith focusing on getting young people active in identifying and solving problems unique to their generation, moved them to Washington, D.C., where they married and lived for the next seven years - "a magical time," Smith noted. Although she loved the East Coast, a San Francisco job offer for her husband brought them to Lafayette six years ago. announcing her interest in "finding my next adventure" prompted a call from a friend suggesting Smith talk to her client, someone looking kids. Smith took that ball and ran to start a new foundation focused on young people, but she couldn't reveal the client's name. Eight becomes a habit in 21 days," Smith months pregnant with Hunter, the said. So the Be Kind 21 campaign first of her two children, and taking

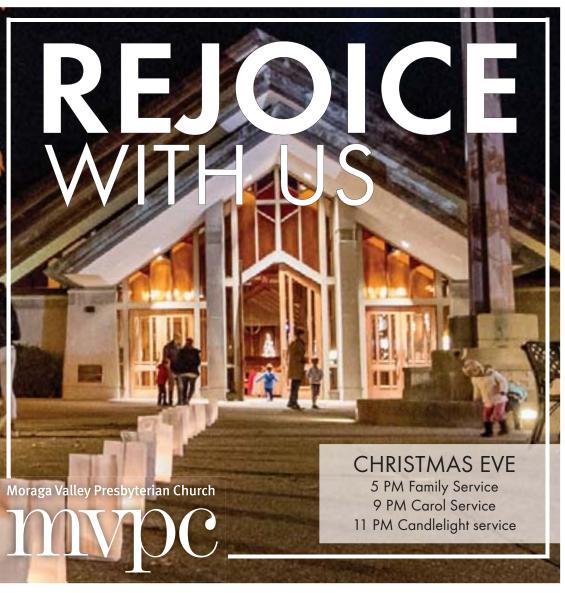
Cept. 11, 2001. A young Maya "to make sure he wouldn't miss the birth of our first child," Smith flew

The client, it turned out, was Jersey's Rutgers University. Then Lady Gaga and that first meeting the planes crashed, the buildings was with her mom and Born This Way Foundation co-founder, Cynthia Germanotta, as well as others from Gaga's team. While light on a local church to donate blood for specific details at the time, Gerthe survivors of the World Trade manotta explained that the basic vision for the foundation was to build a kinder, braver world, while empowering and involving young people. "I just fell in love with the idea that Lady Gaga ... simply asked me to help build a youth ad-

> According to Smith, Gaga experienced a lot of meanness and

Your Full Service Lafayette Shop For Flowers, Plants & Gifts HRISTMAS! - for themselves or others - for 21 days in September. "It actually started at Springhill Elementary School when the kids returned in August and grew like wildfire," 3584 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Lafayette Smith proclaimed proudly. More 925) 284-5765 www.floralartsflorist.com than 20 schools and organizations, including the city of Anaheim and





was different. She had a really hard Smith began reconsidering the time," Smith explained, "and she she ever became successful, she sion, Born This Way was created, She started researching youth with Smith first consulting and explained, "kindness and mental

> Gaga cares deeply about the leads the vision and has said that "this is her legacy to the world," Smith noted. Both women believe strongly in the power and potential of young people.

This past summer, Smith, with the absolute support of Lady Gaga and the foundation, created the Be Kind 21 campaign. "I was having all these really intense feelings about Hunter starting kindergarten, being a little kid in a big school. We talked about ways to make new friends, how to be kind and build a community," Smith remembered. A note Smith sent to contacts Describing her feelings during a foundation staff meeting prompted a suggestion from Germanotta let's have this conversation with all with it.

"Research shows that an action was created and participants were her husband with her just in case, asked to perform an act of kindness

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