

WorldFest Report 2008

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The cool, beautiful morning of November 22, 2008 brought new sounds and bustle to downtown Bryan, Texas. World citizens brought their country dress, instruments, food, family, and their culture to share with Bryan/ College Station. Volunteers from the community set up the booths, provided resources for the cultural booths, lined up performers on the stages, and passed out schedules, maps, and passports to have stamped as children and adults visited each table. Provost Vitter from Texas A&M gave the welcomed the Bryan/College Station community to WorldFest 2008 with a mission of international education, fun, and sharing of knowledge and experience. (Quote from Vitter's speech)

Downtown Bryan represented the world for the day, featuring dance from groups across Texas, music from all over the world, cultural display booths, vendors, and wonderful food from different regions of the world. One could hear Mexican folkloric music, Chinese opera, and Indian men singing as they walked up to the event's streets. The vibrant colors of each country were seen in the traditional dresses and suits from countries such as Bolivia, China, Ecuador, Taiwan, and Saudi Arabia to name a few.

Gabriela SantiStevan, a senior Animal Science major from Bolivia talked about representing her country at the Cultural Booth display. *"Being part of the Bryan/College Station WorldFest was a very gratifying experience. Representing my country, Bolivia, made me notice how important it is for our community to have international awareness. The Bolivian Student Association (BOSA) is made out of Texas A&M and Blinn students who were at WorldFest dancing the Saya, one of our typical dances, and also showing the different costumes Bolivians use. Children and adults came up to our booth to dance and have a good time with us. Children took photos with us and asked very insightful questions. There was one young girl who told me she wanted to go to Bolivia and visit Lake Titicaca. It was the first time I participated in WorldFest, and I just loved it. I am thankful to the people who made this wonderful event happen."*

After students and adults collected ten stamps from different countries, they returned to the information table to receive a free WorldFest bag. At the booths, students learned customs, foods, writings, dress, art, and language from different countries. They made their classroom the world for a day. Students of all ages from 3-33 were fascinated by the dress women and men dawned and the cultural artifacts presented on the tables. The line to buy gyros wrapped around the street like a caravan of travelers. Customers and passersby savored the aroma of meat and vegetables cooking Greek style. Another crowd favorite was the Brazilian cabob, one grill and many Brazilian students preparing delicious meat

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and veggies as quickly as possible. The smiling Mexican ballet folkloric elementary school dancers made impromptu performances in the middle of the street in front of the tacos stand.

Jun, Xing, a Confucius Institute Chinese teacher said, "We designed the Chinese booths to introduce some Chinese culture and history. Some Chinese students displayed Chinese calligraphy and painting. Children had their faces painted as a Beijing Opera mask. We also told visitors their zodiac animal year to teach them how to write it down in Chinese characters. I also visited other counties' displays. They were wonderful. I was fascinated by their culture and food. I tasted delicious Mexico food and French food."

The winning cultural display was China, which included calligraphy writings on red tissue paper, posters, maps, tables with artifacts; everyone had to have their name written in Chinese. Flamenco dancers from Houston performed a variety of dances from Spain, and the Taiko drum performers were a highlight of WorldFest. People from far away thought the sound was thunder, but really it was the largest Japanese drum troupe outside of Japan playing small and very large drums at the Theatre stage. The rhythmic performance gave energy to the audience and their animated faces and drumming left the crowd in amazement.

Anita McCormick, Professor of Educational Psychology at Texas A&M attended with her son. "We really liked Worldfest. In fact, this is the second year we go, because it was so much fun the first time around. I enjoyed meeting people from so many different countries and learn more about their traditions and culture. The dances and presentations of the different groups and nations were very festive, and there was a lot to do for the children. In addition, Patrick really liked the idea of the passport. He got all the stamps and had his name written in 12 different languages. All the participants were very kind and accessible to the children and had interesting information for them about their country. Patrick even had the opportunity to have a turban made for him. He loved the experience and we will not miss the one next year. The whole experience was wonderful," said McCormick.

From the first WorldFest to this year's festivities, the number of attendees more than doubled; there were more cultural displays, vendors, and food sellers. You can learn more about the world outside Bryan/College Station while staying in Bryan/College Station for the day. See you next year at WorldFest 2009 for more fun and exciting performances.