

Aggies Celebrate International Week

Written by student intern reporter, Julia Paslavska, April 28, 2009

The International Student Association of Texas A&M University brought the 2009 International Week to Aggieland for the 29th year. During the seven day celebration, thousands of international students were pleased to share their culture with the rest of the University through events such as shows, cultural displays, a Consuls General Luncheon, and a screening of the international film – Pan’s Labyrinth.

The week kicked off on Friday February 27th, with an opening ceremony at the Rudder Auditorium, followed by an International Variety Show. During March 2nd and 3rd, a number of international student organizations arranged displays in the MSC hallways with cultural artifacts, pictures, food, and music from their home countries. Columbia, Kazakhstan, Thailand, Bolivia, Iran, Venezuela, and China are just a few of the many countries that were represented during the two day event.

Perhaps, the highlight of the week was the Consuls General Luncheon, which took place on Thursday, March 5th. Some of Texas A&M’s most prominent leaders and a number of Consul Generals came together to celebrate those students and professors who dedicate their lives to spreading international awareness through their work, research, and studies. Four finalists of the 2009 Eppright Outstanding International Student Award and three recipients of the Bush Excellence Award for Faculty in International Teaching were recognized at the luncheon.

Dr. Jeffrey S. Vitter, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academics at Texas A&M extended a warm welcome to all the guests at the event. Dr. Vitter explained that the International Week is the largest event of its kind in Western United States, which with the help of 4,500 A&M’s international students from 129 different countries brings the opportunity for all Aggies to get to know the world on a more personal level. “Being an educated citizen today means knowing about and being comfortable with the different cultures in our community”, said Dr. Vitter. “Today is a way of saying thank you to all the international students for sharing the world with our campus”, he added.

The Honorable Ricardo Guthier, Dean of the Houston Consular Corps and Consul General of Argentina also took the stand and expressed his gratitude for being able to serve as the liaison between the world and this region of the United States, and more specifically Texas A&M University. “Every time we come to Texas A&M, we feel at home, which is part of the reason that we keep coming back”, said Mr. Guthier.

Following Mr. Guthier’s speech, Ambassador Eric M. Bost, Vice President for Global Initiatives at Texas A&M presented the 2009 Eppright Outstanding International Student Award. Ms. Meera Alagaraja, a Ph.D. student from India studying Educational Administration and Human Resource Development was the recipient of the award. “Ms. Alagaraja is a diligent, committed, responsible team player with outstanding qualities”, said Ambassador Bost. The Eppright Outstanding International Student Award is currently the highest award given to an international student and Ms. Alagaraja’s hard work and contributions to the campus community are well deserving of the honor. Aside from maintaining a very high GPA, Ms. Alagaraja has served as Vice-President for the India Association, helped organize I-camp for incoming international

students, served as director of the Diversity Team of Student Government, published three articles and 17 conference papers, and is highly involved in the Bryan/College Station community.

Three faculty members received the Bush Excellence Award for Faculty in International Research for their dedication to international teaching, international research, and public service. Dr. Renyi Zhang, Professor of Atmospheric Sciences and Chemistry, Dr. Kirk Winemiller, Professor of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences, and Dr. Larry Johnson, Professor of Veterinary Integrative Biosciences were the three recipients of the prestigious award.

Before the week-long celebration officially ended with a closing ceremony, the International Student Association offered a screening of the Spanish film *Pan's Labyrinth*. The Spanish language fantasy film, which won three Academy Awards, was a great way to end the memorable week.