

Bringing the World to the Brazos Valley

Written by student intern reporter, Julia Paslavska, May 5, 2009

On November 22, 2008 hundreds of people gathered in Historic Downtown Bryan to celebrate the second annual Brazos Valley Worldfest. With nearly 60 cultural booths hosting activities such as performances, international cuisine, displays, and children's crafts there was something for everyone to enjoy. According to Kim Fox, the program coordinator of the Office of International Outreach "Worldfest is an international festival whose mission is to promote and celebrate the international diversity and heritage of the Brazos Valley".

"We do live in a community that is blessed with having many diverse cultures represented and it's important to know about the people we live with and their background and culture", said Clay Reibe, President of Citibank of Bryan-College Station and Worldfest sponsor. Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, Mexico, Turkey, Brazil, Ecuador, and India are just a few of the many countries presented at the festival.

Community organization representing several countries of the European Union also joined the crowd in the celebration. Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary shared a booth where the visitors learned about the traditional clothing of the Balkan states and enjoyed the sounds of the states' folk music. The Brazos Valley Czech Heritage Society offered an assortment of activities to the festival attendees as well. Performances by the Taylor Czech Chorus, samples of authentic Czech Kolaches, children's activities, and demonstrations of Czech Sauerkraut making kept the long lines of visitors anxiously waiting to get a taste of the Czech culture. In the neighboring booth, the Texas Polka Music Museum provided European Polka, Waltz, and Folk Music to those enjoying their Kolaches and Sauerkraut.

The European Union Center itself joined the other cultural organizations in raising awareness about its mission and purpose through displays and educational give-aways. Visitors of all ages enjoyed the booklets of interesting facts about the 27 countries in the Union, and children were thrilled to receive the imitated paper Euros given out at the booth.

In its second year, the Brazos Valley Worldfest was successful at attracting more participants and attendees than the previous year. One of the attendees summarized the outcome of the day: "WorldFest was a great event to bring the world to the Brazos Valley. It taught me not only about the diversity in our world, but also in our community".