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Diversity, culture of Asia celebrated

Asian Festival continues to grow every year

BY ELIZABETH M. MACK • DEMOCRAT STAFF WRITER • OCTOBER 4, 2009

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Eager to learn all they could about Asian culture, 150 girl scouts toured Bloxham and Lewis parks at Saturday's fifth annual Asian Festival.

"For the Girl Scouts, diversity is a very important aspect of the American culture," said Alva Stone, volunteer-event director for the Girl Scouts Council of the Florida Panhandle. "We want the girls to learn about tradition and art in parts of the world."

Stone said it was their fourth time coming to the event — and they "love the food, entertainment, arts and crafts."

Organizers said the event in downtown Tallahassee attracted more than 1,200 people and featured 70 vendors and exhibitors. Authentic food, clothing and other wares from various parts of Asia were available.

"Every year, it gets bigger and bigger," said Thayumana Somasundaram of the India Association of Tallahassee. "It's been a great opportunity for us to show and share our culture with the people of Tallahassee."

Aurora Hansen, director of Cultural Affairs for the Asian Coalition of Tallahassee, said every Asian country was represented in music, dance or food.

Sheryl Grossman said she came for the music and the dancing.

Crowds gathered to watch dancing, drumming and other performances. "Matsuriza: Taiko Drumming from Japan" had the crowd laughing and cheering as performers showed off different techniques and added comical moments while banging on their large drums.

William Halsford attended the event for the first time. He said the drummers were his favorite, but the overall event was nice as well.

"I enjoy experiencing diverse cultural events, especially the food and dance," he said. "It's refreshing to see a variety of different cultures and nationalities mixing together."

Wade Yang believes the event helps to bridge East and West.

"This is extremely important," he said. "This brings understanding about each other's values (and traditions)."

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The entire line up of the Parade of International Attire. The fifth annual Asian Festival, took place at Bloxham and Lewis parks in downtown Tallahassee. The event will feature martial arts, dance, singing and food. on Saturday, October 3, 2009 (Glenn Beil/Democrat)



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A woman displays her hands adorned with henna art. (Glenn Beil/Democrat)



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Weimei Zheng writes names in Chinese calligraphy during the festival. (Glenn Beil/Democrat)



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Taiko drums are seen before a performance from Matsuriza, a traveling Japanese drumming group. (Glenn Beil/Democrat)



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Jane Marks holds her cell phone up to the stage microphone so that her husband and mayor of Tallahassee John Marks can talk to the crowd during the fifth annual Asian Festival. (Glenn Beil/Democrat)