



Bringing down the barriers

Texas A&M students have been able to discover the world this week while staying in College Station, says Diana Galindo, president of the International Students Association.

This week is International Week at A&M, an event designed to give people the opportunity to experience the cultures of other nations.

"They can visit over 50 countries without paying money or leaving A&M," Galindo says.

This year's theme is "Bringing Down the Barriers: The Age of Unity." Galindo says that by showing crafts, music, and food of different countries, International Week promotes cultural awareness.

Jennifer Abraham, vice-president of the Lebanese Students Association and a member of the International Week publicity team, says the theme represents all the changes taking place internationally.

"Democracy is taking over in many places in the world," Abraham says, "and this theme symbolizes the unification of people and of governments."

Galindo, a senior speech communications major from Bolivia, says the barriers between people of different countries result from a lack of communication, awareness and understanding. International Week is a way of bringing down those barriers, she says.

"If you're not aware of different cultures, it causes conflict," she says. "If you are aware, then there aren't any problems."

International Week is especially important for American students, Galindo says, because it shows them the differences in the world and educates them about those differences in order to create understanding.

The week's activities have included cultural displays, an art exhibit, and an international buffet.

On Monday and Tuesday, students set up display booths for cultural artifacts from their countries. Works of art by international students reflecting their ideas of cultural heritage also were displayed in the MSC Flag Room.

And on Wednesday, students from 34 nations prepared a buffet offering samples of traditional food from their home countries.

Galindo says the buffet is one of International Week's most memorable activities each year. Students get an allowance to cook three dishes that will feed 1,000 people.

A round table discussion on education will begin at 8 to-

night in Rudder Auditorium. Galindo says the forum gives students the opportunity to exchange opinions and information about the impact education has on world integration.

The forum will begin with a panel presentation featuring history professor Dr. Betty Unterberger, agricultural engineering professor Dr. Bill Stout, and Dr. Dean Corrigan, former dean of education. Their presentation will be followed by small group discussions led by faculty moderators.

International Week ends Friday with a talent show and traditional dress parade, which Galindo calls the highlight of the week's activities. The event consists of 24 acts, with fashion exhibitions between each act.

More than 400 international students will participate in the show, and Galindo says their enthusiasm makes it the most exciting event each year.

"Everyone is so proud of their culture and the chance to bring it to A&M," she says.

Galindo says that Friday evening's activities will show what International Week is meant to accomplish. To produce the show, all students involved must transcend the barriers of language and culture.

"That they can work together to produce a show," she says, "is proof that all nations can work together successfully."

Galindo says the talent show is not just a show, but a bridge to the world and that it opens windows to different music, dance, and dress.

A special feature of this year's International Week is the Estudiantina, the strolling band of Mexico's La Salle University. The all-male band, comprised of high school and university students, has toured throughout the world.

"The Estudiantina is like the Corps of Cadets is here," Galindo says, "a very proud tradition of the universities."

The International Students Association has worked for the past nine weeks to pull everything together, Galindo says, and some groups started even earlier, constructing booths and practicing dances.

In all, more than 1,000 students representing more than 50 countries, have been involved in organizing International Week activities.

The talent show and traditional dress parade will begin at 8 p.m. in Rudder Auditorium. Tickets are available for \$3.50 at Rudder Box Office. The art exhibits will be displayed through March 7 in Rudder Exhibit Hall.



Rudy Romangsuria, a student from Indonesia, plays a gamelon set, a traditional Indonesian instrument.

Photos of International Week
cultural display by
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