

A week of INTERNATIONAL CULTURES

International Week celebrates diversity of A&M students

By Amber Clark
THE BATTALION

Students can step outside of the A&M microcosm this week to celebrate cultures from around the world.

International Week, hosted by the International Student Association, provides activities that introduce people to the diverse ethnic groups represented on campus.

International Week began 16 years ago when Tina Watkins, International Student Association adviser, observed a similar program at another university. Watkins and a group of foreign students started A&M's International Day.

Patty Jaar, president of the International Student Association, said this week is dedicated to Watkins, who will retire at the end of the semester.

Nicaraguan Club Treasurer Karla Jimenez, a junior chemical engineering major, said international students often have to learn about American culture before they can feel comfortable here, and International Week gives the students an opportunity to show pride in their native traditions.

"Our main purpose was to teach international students about A&M during I Camp, which is equivalent to Fish Camp," Jimenez said. "They come here without

knowing much. If you look up 'Aggie' in the dictionary like I did, you can't find it. During International Week, these students can show what the North American culture doesn't always know."

Today in the MSC, students can visit cultural displays attended by representatives from approximately 30 countries. The booths have arts and crafts exhibits and general information on each country.

Jaar said visitors are encouraged to ask questions to help increase awareness of the different cultures.

The International Buffet, scheduled for Wednesday night on the second floor of the MSC, features traditional cuisine from 30 countries. Jimenez, who is also the assistant director of the International Buffet, said the dinner is the most popular event of International Week.

The association expects 1,500 guests, and each visitor can sample 12 dishes. Jaar said the visitors will be issued tickets or "passports" to use at each booth.

"That's how we keep track of how many samples they've had," Jaar said. "They get their tickets stamped for every dish they get. At the end of the night, they can show their 'passport' and say they 'ate around the world.'"

Pie de Monte, a musical group traveling from Venezuela especially for International Week, will provide entertainment for

the dinner guests.

On Thursday, presidents from each participating country's organization will meet their respective consuls, or foreign representatives, for lunch. Consuls are individuals appointed by foreign countries to protect the interests of citizens who are residing abroad.

"It's really cool," Jaar said. "This is the only real contact the consuls get with the students from their country."

Jaar, who is from Honduras, said the consuls will travel from Houston for the invitation-only meeting.

The week will conclude with the International Talent Show and Fashion Parade on Friday night. Participants will perform traditional folk dances during the talent show, and the fashion show will feature students in native clothing giving brief demonstrations of native language.

"The show is really quite a sight," Jaar said. "It will give you goosebumps."

The closing ceremony and awards presentation will immediately follow the talent and fashion shows.

Jimenez said preparations for International Week have been hectic, but the organization has received an excellent response from the community.

"One of the reasons we get a positive response is because the people can learn a lot," Jimenez said.



Bart Mitchell / THE BATTALION

Patty Jaar, president of the International Student Association, with the flag of Honduras, her native homeland.

Dance team adds flavor to A&M basketball games

By Amy Collier
THE BATTALION

When she hears the music throbbing and the crowd cheering, Heather Hugo, a member of the Texas Aggie Dance Team, said she feels an adrenaline rush.

"When you run off the floor knowing you've had a great performance, that's when you realize all of your hard work has paid off," Hugo said. "Being on the team, I get to do what I love best — to dance."

Since 1990, the dance team has been adding excitement to basketball games by performing a funk-style of dance during halftime and time outs. The team is performing at 13 A&M men's and women's home basketball games this season.

Holly Perry, a senior accounting major and captain of the dance team, said because of little exposure in the past, the team does not get the respect it deserves.

"For all of the work that we do, I don't think people realize how much time and effort we put into it," Perry said. "We're a new organization, so we realize that we're struggling to become a tradition at A&M."

To gain recognition this season, the team has performed at more games, and has participated in more activities on campus, Perry said.

"I'm really excited this year because our name is getting out so much," Perry said. "Recognition will come with time."

Kim Dwarshus, a junior elementary education major and social officer of the dance team, said many people don't understand the purpose of the team.

"I think a lot of people are sometimes threatened by us," Dwarshus said. "They think we're going to be cheerleaders and are going to replace the yell leaders. They totally misunderstand that that's not what we're there for. We're there to encourage spirit

through dance at basketball games. We don't want to be cheerleaders."

Perry said the dance team's purpose is merely to be supportive of the basketball teams.

"I think we add a lot of excitement to the games," Perry said. "We're there to support the team and any opportunity that we have to dance, we like to take it to keep the crowd into the game. We add variety because you're not always doing yells and not always listening to the band."

Each spring, between 150 and 200 girls try out for the team, Perry said. Competitors are taught a dance routine during a four-day clinic.

After they learn the dance, the girls perform the routine and 40 girls are chosen for an interview. Twenty girls are chosen for the team, and three officers of the team are chosen.

Because of the great amount of time it takes to be on the dance team, Perry said freshmen are not allowed to be on the team.

"We're trying to let people who come in as freshmen get stabilized," Perry said. "College is a really big deal and when you jump into school and dance team, which is 10 hours of practice a week, it's kind of a struggle. The dance team stresses dancing second to academics only."

The members of the dance team are quite busy, considering they have to practice at least four nights a week. Hugo said her busy schedule has taught her how to manage her time.

"With eight to 10 hours of practice a week, time management is a must," Hugo said. "The dance team adds structure in your life."

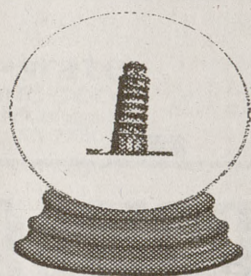
After all of the hard practicing is over, Perry said performing at the games is the best reward.

"To me, there's a real thrill in entertaining people and it kind of gives me a high to be in front of people," Perry said. "I love the dance team with all of my heart and soul."



Stew Milne / THE BATTALION

The Texas Aggie Dance Team performs a routine at halftime of an A&M basketball game.



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902 George Bush Drive
(light supper following service)

St. Thomas Church - 7:00 a.m. - 6:15 p.m.
906 George Bush Drive

St. Francis Church - 12 noon - 7 p.m.
1101 Rock Prairie Road

St. Andrew's Church - 12 noon - 7 p.m.
217 W. 26th Street, Bryan