



Tim Moog, THE BATTALION

Anita Snell, a junior special education major, and Saul Garcia, a freshman business major perform the "Jesúsita," a type of polka, at the Hispanic Unity Rally on Friday.

Hispanic Heritage Month

Students celebrate cultural unity, awareness

By Amy Protas
THE BATTALION

The voice of Hispanic culture on campus is being heard loud and clear.

This year's theme of Hispanic Heritage Month is "United with One Voice" — a message Hispanic student groups are trying to accomplish and prove to the campus.

Hispanic Heritage Month was started by the Bush administration and has become a nationwide month of celebration.

Olivia Villagra, a senior civil engineering major, said the nature of the Hispanic culture has made it difficult to form a unified group.

"We are a laid-back culture," Villagra said. "We are taught to be humble and not to come together when other Hispanics are in trouble. We need to change that."

The month is sponsored by the Hispanic Presidents' Council, a group formed to support campus Hispanic organizations. The HPC serves as an umbrella group for all Hispanic organizations by giving them information.

The month kicked off on September 15 with a unity rally featuring Felix Torres, president of KBMA radio station and the Ballet Folklorico Celestial. The celebration will end on Oct. 13 with a fajita cookout at The Grove.

The Ballet Folklorico Celestial is an A&M dance group that performs Mexican folk dancing.

Paola Ruelas, a junior management major, said there is a distinct difference in the different dances.

"The Ballet Folklorico does the various folk dances of Mexico," Ruelas said. "Like in the United States, the regions of Mexico are all different. The ballet depicts each region's different style of dress and dancing."

Mark Aguirre, a senior accounting major, said he joined the Committee for the Awareness of Mexican American Culture to help promote appreciation of his culture and to develop

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senior industrial engineering major

leadership skills.

"I grew up in a violent, mainly Hispanic neighborhood in San Antonio," Aguirre said. "To me, places like that need leaders. I want to go back and help educate others."

Hispanic student groups are sponsoring a variety of events to commemorate the month.

Omega Delta Phi, a Hispanic fraternity, is sponsoring a showing of *Mi Familia* Friday and Saturday at 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

The movie portrays a family adapting to America after coming from Mexico.

Daniel Romo, a senior industrial engineering major and member of Omega Delta Phi, said Hispanics need to have an outlet to display their culture.

"Any culture has to have some kind of showing," Romo said. "Our traditions are a lot of fun, and I want people to understand us."

One misconception people tend to have about Hispanic cultures is that they are all the same. Romo said the Hispanic and Latino cultures are extremely different. The music, customs and even the language differ from each other.

Ruelas said she doesn't want students to get the wrong idea about Hispanic Heritage Month.

"A lot of people are scared of terms like 'Hispanic Heritage Month,'" Ruelas said. "There are different worlds people need to learn about and experience. We're all the same, just different flavors."

Noé Lopez, a senior finance major, said he hopes this is the year Hispanic culture on campus finally feels united.

"I don't think we've been speaking up loud enough as a people or a culture," Lopez said. "Now, we are the strongest we have ever been. I hope we can be so united that we can go out and let our message be known."

Hispanic students find support in Greek organizations

By Jan Higginbotham
THE BATTALION

For some Hispanic students, going Greek is a good way to hold on to their culture.

Hispanic students at A&M have a unique opportunity to be a part of a family away from home through Kappa Delta Chi, a Hispanic sorority, and Omega Delta Phi, a Hispanic fraternity.

Olivia Villagra, president of Kappa Delta Chi and a senior civil engineering major, said the sorority is made up of women who are committed to each other.

"Everyone is very friendly," Villagra said. "We promote sisterhood. You grow so much as a person when you come into the organization. We're like a mini-family."

Daniel Romo, a senior electrical engineering major and member of Omega Delta Phi, said the fraternity offers that family feeling.

"I joined to get to know people like me here at A&M," Romo said. "I wanted to meet friends and their families. They made me feel at home because I didn't know who to relate to at A&M. They took me under their wing and got me through my first semester."

Villagra said the sorority, which was started in 1991, works to further the values of unity, integrity, leadership and honesty.

"We promote these values among all our women," she said. "We believe it is also important to service our community as well as the University."

Each member of Kappa Delta Chi is required

to perform a certain number of community service hours each year. The sorority tutors bilingual students at Bonham Elementary School and volunteers at the League of United Latin-American Citizens retirement home.

Villagra said members of Kappa Delta Chi also remain active in other multicultural activities.

"Anything that is going on in the Hispanic culture we participate in," she said. "We are also trying to diversify ourselves as much as we can with other multicultural groups."

Romo said Omega Delta Phi promotes this diversity through cooperation with other campus organizations.

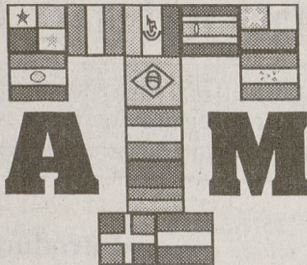
"Our goal of the last year has been to get active with other groups," Romo said.

April Arias, a senior journalism major and member of Kappa Delta Chi, joined the sorority two-and-a-half years ago because she wanted to become more involved with Hispanic organizations on campus.

"Kappa Delta Chi has helped me to identify what kind of person I am and what kind of leader and individual I want to be when I graduate," Arias said. "I think I will always be active with the organization."

In addition to service opportunities, Romo said the organizations offer Hispanic students a social benefit.

"Everybody knows each other," he said. "We are a family. We share a very close bond. Even people who have already graduated keep in touch. Everyone is equal here — that is how we keep close."



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Amy Serda, a senior elementary education major, and Vanessa Medina, a sophomore biochemistry major dance the flirtatious "Sinaloa" at the Hispanic Unity Rally in front of Rudder fountain.

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