

## International fest highlights diversity

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A multitude of students from different ethnic backgrounds came together last Saturday afternoon to celebrate the diversity of Niles West at the International Fest titled “Unmask the Many Worlds of West.”

Among the clubs that participated were: Assyrian Club, Chinese Club, Filipino Club, Hellenic Club, Indo-Pak Club, Korean Club and Serbian Club.

According to the fest’s program, the Fest “reflects our ongoing effort to come together as a community to celebrate our differences.”

The students who performed had varying reasons to take part in the event.

“I wanted to participate in International Fest because I’m a senior and it was my last chance to do so,” senior Filipino Club member Arianne Garcia said.

Senior Jeanne Chiu, who participated with the Chinese Club performance, said, “I participated because I wanted to show Chinese culture to the community and the school, and I also wanted to do something extraor-

dinary.”

Chinese Club performed a ribbon and fan dance as well as a Chinese lion dance for the audience. Other clubs’ performances included traditional as well as modern dances.

Dancers incorporating modern perspectives included junior Mikey Banchoencharoensu, who performed in the Filipino Club’s modern hip-hop dance. “We had a good time on stage, even though we only practiced for five days,” Banchoencharoensu said.

Garcia, who choreographed the Filipino Club’s hip-hop dance and sang a Tagalog song, said, “We put the song together just a couple days before the International Fest, yet it ended up being better than I expected.”

Many other clubs spent much longer, some up to a few months preparing for the event.

According to Senior Aggeliki Gikas, representing the Hellenic Club, her group took around a month to prepare for their two dances.

Senior Esther Aessa, of the Assyrian Club, said preparing for the Fest required commitment

and cooperation.

“We had to work extra hard to find a common practicing schedule,” Aessa said. “However, we figured it out and had fun showing people our Assyrian culture and how we dance.”

Despite the enthusiastic feeling of the afternoon, some participants felt the Fest would have been even better if more clubs had participated.

“This year there were [fewer] clubs representing their cultures, and I wish there would have been more because it exemplifies the diversity of West even more,” Garcia said.

Aessa also stressed the importance of participating. “I think International Fest is necessary so we don’t get lost in the melting pot of American culture,” she said. “It is very important for us to remember our culture and stick to our roots, as well as to know about other

people’s cultures so that we can be more open-minded”

Overall, however, “The whole diversity of the school came together and people became friends during practice,” said Gikas.



Jeanne Chiu dances.  
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*Spectrum*.