



Courtesy Photo

'The Winds of Asia' will blow through Eugene this weekend

■ The Oregon Asian Celebration happens Saturday and Sunday at the Lane County Fairgrounds

By Arlene Juan for the Emerald

For the past 16 years, the Eugene-Springfield Asian Council has enhanced appreciation of Asian and Asian American cultural heritage by holding the annual Oregon Asian Celebration. The two-day event this year will reflect the theme "The Winds of Asia," and feature Asian cultures extending from the Middle East to the Far East.

The celebration will run 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday. Admission for adults is \$4 and children under the age of 12 get in free.

"Through dance, music, art, foods, songs, cooking demonstrations, children's games, martial arts and crafts, people (gain) a greater appreciation of diversity, understanding and tolerance for cultural differences," spokeswoman Carrie Matsushita said. "The Asian Celebration is a showcase of the various Asian ethnic groups and demonstrates a wide range of diversity within the Asian community."

This year's celebration will fill the Eugene Convention Center at the Lane County Fairgrounds Saturday and Sunday with an array of entertainment and delicacies from the different corners of Asia.

The celebration attracts visitors from all over Oregon, California, Hawaii, Utah and Canada, event co-chairman Ken Nagao said.

"The very first Asian Celebration was a half-day event with 500 visitors, 7 food booths and 20 arts and

crafts booths. Now, it is becoming more recognized and attracting nearly 15,000 to 18,000 people each year," he said.

Community support is imperative to the celebration's success.

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Carrie Matsushita
Asian Celebration spokeswoman

"Every one of the estimated 2,000 people involved in this year's festival is a volunteer," Nagao said. "The support of the community is outstanding."

The set-up in the center will be the same as last year, said Tony Lum, event co-chairman and entertainment chairman. There will be two main stages: one designated as the main performance stage and one in the Exhibition Hall for martial arts performances. A smaller stage will be located in the Atrium Courtyard for small craft demonstrations.

"The celebration is where different Asian cultures can show off their skills, craftsmanship and entertainment," Lum said.

The Chinese Lion Dance, Japanese Koto, and Middle Eastern Dance are just a few of the performances that will be featured at the event. There will be an abundance of culi-

nary specialties, including Chinese, Nepalese, Korean, Indian, Pakistani, Japanese, Philippine and Taiwanese cuisine.

Demonstrations will vary from craftmaking and cooking to martial arts activities. The celebration will also entertain children with storytelling, origami, lantern making, taiko drumming and more.

"All proceeds from the event will benefit the scholastic community by sponsoring Asian American cultural education activities, making scholarship grants, and establishing an Asian American Cultural Education Center in the Eugene area," Nagao said.

The organizers of this event strongly believe that the Asian Celebration is an educational and entertainment opportunity.

"More and more people comment how much they appreciate this festival in the community," Matsushita said. "Teachers use the festival as a learning tool for students, visitors learn about the diversity of customs and traditions of various Asian ethnic groups, and the business community, especially the tourism industry, benefits from the room nights booked by out-of-town visitors and vendors."

Lourdes Humphries, secretary of the Eugene Philippine American Association, thinks the Asian Celebration is a positive contribution to the community.

"There is a sense of togetherness as different Asian cultures come together to enjoy the festivities," she said.

Arlene Juan is a freelance reporter for the Oregon Daily Emerald.

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