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Occasion aims to unite minorities

Weaving New Beginnings celebrates diversity and provides the opportunity to meet fellow minorities

By Jared Paben
News Reporter

For members of minority communities on campus, tonight's ninth annual Weaving New Beginnings celebration is going to be like "a big welcoming party," said Kimi Mojica, director of diversity education and support for the Office of Student Life.

"That's why it's Weaving New Beginnings because we want faculty, staff and students to get hooked up in this community fast," she said. "That doesn't mean you're all going to be best friends, or you're all going to get this cosmic connection with people, but the fact is that you can be in a place where there isn't the pressure of a classroom or social pressures. The only thing is to meet people and have a good night."

Weaving New Beginnings will start at 6:30 p.m. tonight in the EMU Ballroom.

Lyllye Parker, program coordinator for the Office of Multicultural Affairs, said the celebration is primarily geared toward new minority students at the

University, such as freshmen and transfer students. It offers them the opportunity to meet fellow minority students and professors and feel connected, but faculty and staff also benefit from the celebration as well.

"It's an opportunity for us professionals to see each other," she said. "You kind of get locked into your little cubicle in your department and come and go without anybody knowing that you're here."

Parker added that the event also gives instructors the chance to interact with students in a less formal situation.

Event organizers said they don't want people to think that Weaving New Beginnings is only about providing refuge for minorities.

"This celebration isn't to tell people 'This place is a really hard place to be,'" Mojica said. "We want the celebration to tell people that people are here and they're going to be here and there's more people coming, so enjoy it and take part in it."

To facilitate the process of networking and socializing, Mojica developed the "black books." The black books, which debuted last year, are sort of like a treasure hunt for people. One page says to find "someone who has had 'In and Out' or 'Krispy Kremes,'" and below

that is a space for the person's name, year or major and their signature.

The event always has some form of entertainment as well. Previous years have featured speakers, awards ceremonies and presentations from student groups. This year, event organizers are planning to make it more of an "intimate club atmosphere, transforming the ballroom to a city club atmosphere," Mojica said. University President Dave Frohnmayer is scheduled to speak, and KWVA 88.1 FM has volunteered to arrange the music. Free food will also be available.

While the event is primarily for minorities, everyone who is supportive of their cause is invited to attend, Mojica said.

She added that they expect a large turnout at this year's event. In past years the event has drawn anywhere from 200 to 400 people. Last year's celebration took place in the winter and coincided with multiple campus events but still drew 250 people.

"Last year people were here 'till about 10:30 p.m.," Mojica said. "We had to tell them 'OK, we're going to clean everything up now.'"

Contact the people/culture/faith reporter at jaredpaben@dailymerald.com.

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DPS

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"They didn't seem like they liked students, but I don't think that holds true for all of them."

He added that there were some officers who were very kind.

DPS Operations Lieutenant Herb Horner said most of his relations with students have been positive, adding that students' reactions to DPS may depend on the nature of DPS-student interaction.

"It depends on the time of the day and how much they've had to drink or smoke or whether they're sober," he

said, adding that he knows the officers are not always popular.

Horner said he feels the Bonertz incident will not permanently affect DPS' image because every department has "personnel issues."

Despite the varying opinions on how students feel about DPS, some students have ideas about how to improve the department's relationship with campus.

Florendo said meetings between officers and the student body might help to revamp the DPS image, adding that officers should be more personable and not act superior to students.

Kimes said she thinks a lot of DPS services are unclear to students, and people place emphasis on the negative aspects of the department. She said if there was more focus on the positive services that the department offers, it might improve the relationship between officers and the student body.

Some of the current concerns about the DPS-student relationship will be discussed at ASUO's annual Public Safety forum on Oct. 30, Tarvin said. She added that DPS officers' ability to issue citations, which was authorized in the summer, may be another potential source of tension between students and officers.

"This is something of concern because we students should not have to feel threatened within our own space," she said.

Horner said DPS is trying to have more officers patrol on bicycles, hoping that this will make it easier for students to interact with them.

"Just being out there and approachable," he said. "I'm hoping that it will give students a more relaxed feeling about approaching our officers. They don't bite."

Contact the news editor at ayishayahya@dailymerald.com.

CAMPUS BUZZ

Wednesday

Freeman lecture by Wang Gungwu, director of the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore, 3 p.m., Knight Library Browsing Room, free. For more information, visit <http://www.uoregon.edu/~caps> or call 346-1521.

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