

Features

World on display

Karen Watson
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Languages from around the world were celebrated with dancing, food and music at the Third Annual World Language Day on Saturday, hosted by Sacramento State's Foreign Language Department.

Colorful costumes filled the Library quad, where one could enjoy and watch salsa dancing, take a polka lesson and sample a number of delicious foods from around the world.

"I got this idea while cranking out the miles on my Stairmaster," said Kathy Moore, Sac State language professor. "I wanted to do something really massive. I wanted to make our community aware of the need to know more than one language."

White doves were released to open the event, symbolizing the five continents and the many cultures represented. Numerous workshops were available to treat event-goers to cultural music and traditions.

Elementary and high schools from around the area were invited, as well as many university and college students. Moore said the Multi-Cultural Center was a vital part of the festivities this year.

Kim Braverman and her daughter Katie, 7, took origami lessons in one of the workshops, where they learned to fold paper tulips from Anna Vo, a Sac State student.

"It's not as easy as it looks," Braverman said. "But Katie's having fun."

Sac State students Becky Griffith, a nursing major, and Yvette Breeding, sociology major, checked out the American Sign Language exhibit in the Library.

A collection of more than 300 books and videos, covering many aspects of American Sign Language, are available for students and members of the community.

"Sign language is easier to retain," Griffiths said. "I've met a lot of deaf people at my job. I was able once to give them directions without writing it down. It made me so happy."

Breeding said she has used sign language while working with autistic children.

"A lot of them are nonverbal," Breeding said. "But they can learn to sign."

Moore said that this year the committee wanted to emphasize the practical nature of learning a language and the careers that are available for bilingual people.

Recruiters from the FBI, court interpreters and a company that supplies translators were manning booths, getting the word out that they need bilingual employees.

“Since Sept. 11, there’s a great need to find the people who are out to cause harm and try to prevent things from happening,” said Pamas Bhatti, a language analyst for the FBI. “We need well-qualified people to assist agents.”

Mike Cline, from the Sacramento Superior Court, also was recruiting.

He manages the many interpreters used by the county’s courts and jails. His interpreters translate more than 50 languages. The salary for an interpreter for just a half-day is \$147. A full eight-hour shift pays \$265.

“We believe this is a long-term, important issue,” Cline said. “It takes a long time to develop an interpreter.”

His wife, Corinne, has worked as a court interpreter for more than 27 years and formerly taught the skill at the University of Massachusetts.

“It’s a difficult skill to acquire,” Cline said. “It’s like learning a musical instrument – you have to practice every day.”

Developing an interpreter program at Sac State to accommodate the need in the community is a desire of Moore’s. The growth in diverse populations in California has only begun, according to many of the professionals at the event.

Music was a big part of this celebration. You could hear reggae, Paraguayan folk, Iranian, the rhythms of Africa and even Christian music sung in Japanese.

Children could experience Disney’s “Aladdin” in French and “Sesame Street” in German.

The lines were long to taste an authentic Japanese dish called Onigiri, a rice ball with tuna, wrapped in seaweed. Fresh strawberry crepes were also available.

Lunchtime entertainment included demonstrations of Kendo and a Japanese bamboo fencing art. Also, Claudia Rodriguez wore a beautiful lace costume from Peru while dancing with bottles stacked on her head.

Moore’s committee included professor Nicole Buffard-O’Shea, lecturer Carol Eberhart, lecturer Laurence Lambert, assistant professor Kazue Masuyama and professor Laurette Suter.

Karen Marie Watson can be reached at features@statehornet.com