

# The Valdosta Daily Times

## Geography Pop Quiz

### Dean Poling

VALDOSTA March 03, 2009 11:49 pm

— What started as an activity to fill time last year has been scheduled as a major event during this Saturday's Azalea International Folk Fair.

“Last year, we had, for the first time, a world geography trivia at the Azalea International Folk Fair to entertain the audience while waiting for the results of the folk dance competition,” says Dr. Michael Noll, who is a Folk Fair board member and teaches geography at Valdosta State University. “What was meant to be a filler during a break turned out to be a huge success.” So, this year, the Folk Fair features a show event called “World Geography: Are You Smarter than a Seventh Grader?”

Similar to the FOX TV show “Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader,” the Folk Fair event focuses specifically on world geography and cultures in keeping with the fair's international theme.

“In contrast to the TV show, two teams of prominent community leaders will compete to find answers to a variety of questions, and a team of seventh graders from local schools, who act as our ‘geography ambassadors,’ will be able to assist the VIPs when they get into trouble,” Noll says. Each VIP team can use a “peek,” a “copy,” and a “save.”

The event's VIP teams are state Rep. Amy Carter (D-Valdosta) and Dr. Deanne Mink, Mink Chiropractic Center, against Cheryl Oliver, Annette Howell Turner Center for the Arts executive director, and Dr. Kevin C. McCowan, McCowan Surgical Associates.

Late last year, Noll sent a letter to principals of regional middle schools, seeking students to serve as “geography ambassadors” for the “Seventh Grader” event. Noll selected six students: Pax Bernhardt, Echols County School; Thomas Chace, Lowndes Middle School; David Deacon, Lowndes Middle School; Daniel Tefft, Valdosta Middle School; Aubrey Wheeler III, Waycross Middle School; Tyler Zeigler, Brooks County Middle School.

This event fits naturally for Noll, who will serve as the master of ceremonies. He is a cultural geographer who earned his doctorate from the University of Kansas and has been teaching at VSU since 2000, with an emphasis on world regional geography, cultural geography, geography of the Middle East, and geography of Europe.

“This event is ultimately all about education and the shared wonders of our diverse planet,” Noll says, “and we want to use this new venue to inspire our audience, young and old, to explore the world with us in a playful fashion.” That comment could well suit the entire Azalea International Folk Fair.

The event started several years ago with Serena Huang, who had a desire to share her native Asian culture and customs with her two children being raised in South Georgia. Several years ago, Huang started with a few dance lessons for her daughter and son's classes at Hahira Middle and Dewar Elementary schools. Huang thought her youngsters may be more accepting of the idea of learning of their parents' culture if they could share it as an educational project with their classmates. Huang's efforts have grown into the Azalea International Folk Fair, which this year features the traditional cultural presentation and performance; the World Culture Folk Dance Competition; the World Geography event; the youth technology mechanical robot project; the youth invention exhibition and presentation.

#### AZALEA INTERNATIONAL FOLK FAIR

When: 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, March 7.

Where: James H. Rainwater Conference Center, off Norman Drive.

Admission: Adults, \$5, advance, \$6, at door; children, \$3 (5-12 years old), free, 4 and under.

More information & detailed schedules, visit: [www.GAinternationalfolkfair.org](http://www.GAinternationalfolkfair.org)