

# **The Valdosta Daily Times**

## **Getting Ready for the Folk Fair**

**Kelli Hernandez**

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— VALDOSTA — Preparations continued for the 2007 Azalea International Folk Fair Saturday as students from Lowndes High School's Cultures in Action program took part in a workshop at Dewar Elementary School to get ready for the event.

The students learned traditional Chinese puzzles, Asian arts and crafts and Asian games during the workshop, which they will teach to middle school children who will participate in this year's field trip day and fair. The seventh-graders will learn about cultures from around the world, including those in China, Japan and Africa, according to Randall Strother, assistant project director.

Isabel Celestino, 14, focused on learning a number of ancient Chinese puzzles, which she will teach to the middle school children, during the workshop. As a Lowndes High freshman, this will be Celestino's first visit to the International Folk Fair. In addition to working with the middle schools, Celestino will also be performing a traditional Mexican dance with two other girls, each representing one color of the Mexican flag, during the festival's folk dance competition. At the next table, Lowndes High freshman Tia Gore worked on origami, an ancient Japanese art of folding paper, making examples for the middle school students. Gore, who has always been interested in Japan and Japanese culture, joined Cultures in Action after going to the International Folk Fair two years ago.

Also working in the arts and crafts department was sophomore Jerry Hasty, who was working on Chinese knot dolls. Hasty was able to turn a piece of string, some beads and a wooden ball into a small doll, which was then attached to a keychain. Others turned pipe cleaners and small squares of paper into beautiful ornaments or flowers using a Japanese technique called kusudama.

In another room, students worked to perfect their techniques after learning Asian games, which will also be taught to the middle schools. The students attending the workshop were also able to practice making traditional international foods, including Japanese sushi and Vietnamese soft spring rolls, which the middle schools will also have the opportunity to taste during their field trip.

Middle school students will not only learn hands-on about the puzzles, games and crafts of cultures from around the world, but will also be able to take a deeper look into traditional architecture, religion and historical figures by browsing through a vast array of display boards made by students and volunteers. Strother, who joined the festival two years ago, made eight display boards in his first year and has been adding to his elaborate collection each year since. With a total of 17 boards, Strother's work focuses mainly on the Philippines, where his mother is from. More than five hours is normally spent building each board after extensive research is done. Strother's work on his display boards has earned him the highest ratings for the past two years, and he hopes to continue that tradition this year. In addition to his displays, Strother will also have traditional artifacts available and has constructed a replica of a traditional nipa hut, called a bahay kubo, in which many in the Philippines still live today. Strother said his goal will be to create a room using bamboo in which the middle school students will feel like they have entered an actual village.

The high school students will meet for a second workshop on March 1 to make final preparations for the field trips on March 2 and the Azalea International Folk Fair on March 3.

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