

The Valdosta Daily Times

Taiwanese Troupe to Visit Valdosta

By Dean Poling
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— VALDOSTA — Thirty-five Taiwanese middle-school students are scheduled to visit Valdosta early next month sharing their culture as they discover Georgia's Southern hospitality. Tallahassee Community College initially invited the Chung Cheng Middle School Folk Sport Troupe of Keelung, Taiwan, to visit the North Florida city. From there, Serena Huang of the Valdosta Asian Cultural Association extended an invitation to Valdosta. The troupe will visit Tallahassee, then arrive Sept. 30 in Valdosta and perform for Hahira, Lowndes and Brooks middle schools, as well as a public show in early October. From Valdosta, the troupe travels for performances in Orlando, Fla., Huang says. In addition to the Valdosta Asian Cultural Association (VACA), the visit is sponsored by The Valdosta Daily Times, Lowndes County schools, and China Garden/Marco Polo restaurants.

What area audiences will see is "some of the favorite recreational activities of young students in Taiwan, including diabolo spinning (an intricate juggling game involving a spool attached to two sticks), rope skipping, top twirling and traditional folk dances," Huang notes. With VACA, Huang has spearheaded the region's annual Asian Cultural Experience, which became the Azalea International earlier this year. These events started with Huang teaching area school students the traditional dances from her native Taiwan. Lowndes and Brooks counties' middle schools students will see these dances in October performed by teenagers from Taiwan.

"The troupe's visit offers our community, especially our middle-school students, a unique educational opportunity," Huang notes. "Now, students will be able to extend their knowledge and understanding of other cultures even further by experiencing firsthand folk arts that are popular thousands of miles away. Moreover, these folk arts will be performed by students their own age."

The troupe's members will go into area classrooms to interact directly with local students, allowing the youngsters an opportunity to learn from one another. The Taiwanese youths, ages 14-15, will be staying with local host families arranged through the Lowndes County school system and Valdosta State University. "They want

to stay with host families because they want to learn more about the American way of life," Huang says.

Funded by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan, the troupe's members serve as Taiwanese cultural ambassadors. The troupe has already performed for thousands of people in locations that include Canada, Russia, Australia, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Brazil, France, Germany and more. Now, they will have the opportunity to learn of South Georgia while we learn about their native Taiwan.

Taiwanese Youth Folks Sports Troupe, Chung Cheng Middle School Folk Sport Troupe of Keelung, Taiwan, is scheduled to perform at area middle schools Oct. 1-2.

Public performance: The troupe will perform for the public, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Oct. 2, Lowndes High School's cafeteria-auditorium.

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Contributed photo Members of Taiwan's Chung Cheng Middle School Folk Sport Troupe are scheduled to visit Lowndes County