

History & Mission

Founded in **2000**, The Valdosta Asian Cultural Association (Now dba Azalea International Folk Fair of Valdosta, Georgia) was created with the clear and definite mission of serving as an invaluable educational resource to augment the social studies curriculum in South Georgia. The images and illustrations portrayed in school textbooks can be limited, abstract, or remote. We envision a project that literally brings the world to our doorsteps and provides a concrete expression of the world's many traditions, cultures, and arts to supplement school textbooks and lessons. Developing programs that bring the world's rich cultural diversity to enrich the lives and educational opportunities of everyone here in South Georgia has been the driving force and primary objective of the organization and all our activities.

We began in **2000** with a three-hour program at the Valdosta-Lowndes Public Library called the Chinese Cultural Reflection that allowed students to explore the richness of the world's oldest living civilization and the social customs of today's modern China.

In **2004**, we were fortunate to form enriching friendships and working partnerships with members of Valdosta's Asian communities. United by a spirit of caring and giving, we worked together to create a program entitled the Asian Cultural Experience to tell a broader story of Asian tradition.

In **2007**, with an unwavering sense of purpose and a strong measure of confidence developed as a result of eight successful years and much valuable experience, we decided to expand the scope of our program to include Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, Europe, Russia and the rest of the global community. In keeping with our expanded mission, we gave the 2007 event a new title: The Azalea International Folk Fair & Dance Competition which showcases amazing number of cultures and countries from around the world represented right here in Valdosta and Lowndes County. They are some of Valdosta's very talented, very dedicated international citizens who have been generously giving their time and energy to share their traditions with us.

On **February 1, 2008**, both Georgia House of Representatives and Georgia State Senate designated Azalea International Folk Fair & Dance Competition as Georgia's official international festival. What an honor!! Congratulation, Valdosta City and Lowndes County!!

Azalea International Folk Fair promotes lively cultural exchange, provides richly diverse entertainment, and enriches the local social studies curriculum in the largest scale in Georgia State. Now the project continues the tradition of having two days of school field trips (on Thursday & Friday) and a one-day regional festival (on Saturday), with teachers, students and visitors coming from all over the South.

Our website at www.GAinternationalfolkfair.org & video clips at www.youtube.com/azaleainternational tells how our grass-roots efforts have helped to open doors for our region's future social, economic, educational and cultural development.