Diversity celebrated in multi-cultural event

Set for April 30 in Millville

Millville will soon become the center of a creative celebration of the many ethnic groups that populate the region in a colorful “Multicultural Festival” on Friday, April 30, at the Glasstown Plaza, High and Sassafras Streets, from 6 to 8:30 p.m.

The Festival is a culmination of Multicultural Week, April 27 through 30, a program of activities and exhibits for fifth graders and high school students from throughout the county. The four-day event is held in partnership with the Millville Public Schools, Glasstown Arts District, Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts, Cumberland County Improvement Authority and the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission.

The Festival brings together members of the diverse Cumberland County community showcasing their heritage in historical and artistic displays as well as through music and dance. Among the exhibits are:

- The African-American Heritage Museum of Southern New Jersey, hosted by the Cumberland County Improvement Authority;
- Cultural-themed artwork by Millville students at the Riverfront Center;
- Other presenters at the Glasstown Plaza: the Down Jersey Folklife Center, Woodbine Heritage Museum, Bayshore Discovery Project, Millville Army Airfield Museum and caricaturist George Fisher.

Another feature will be the opportunity to create origami, the Japanese art of folding paper into decorative shapes and figures, with artist Carol Nagao, and make Italian lace under the direction of Cesarena DCesero.

Confirmed entertainment groups to appear at the Festival are the Latin American Folklore Dancers from Bridgeton High School, Japanese Minyo dancers and the “Polka Pete” Band & Ukrainian dancers.

The Teen Arts Festival is one of the latest victims of New Jersey’s economy in crisis. Because of significant cuts in state arts funding, the Cultural & Heritage Commission has had to dramatically reduce the scope of the event, which was typically a day-long series of workshops and performances for county students ages 13 to 19.

However, all is not lost to creative teens seeking an outlet for their talents. While the daylong series of workshops and instruction had to be eliminated, the Commission is partnering with the Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts (RRCA) for a teen art show at the Pat Witt Gallery at RRCA, beginning on Third Friday, April 16, and extending until May 15. RRCA is at 22 N. High St., Millville.

Henry Hartman, Fine and Performing Arts Supervisor at Millville Senior High School, lamented that budget cuts will curtail his students’ participation in the city’s arts program but credited RRCA with “promoting arts in the city and giving students opportunities they might not have afforded to them.”

In the past, the Teen Arts Festival brought teenagers and artists together to collaborate and learn from one another. Over the last few years the Festival has been held along the river in Millville’s Arts District. Teenage students from throughout the county expressed themselves for decades, from watercolors to dancing to poetry.

“Although we love the high quality and impact of the Teen Arts Festival as we have seen it the past few years, the difficult financial times we are in require us to re-evaluate all our programming to ensure we are getting the biggest bang for every dollar,” said Roy Kaneshiki, Chairman of the Cultural & Heritage Commission. “We have formed a special committee to find ways to recreate the impact and quality of the Teen Arts Festival at a much lower overall cost. Although the format may prove to be quite different, our goal is to meet and exceed previous levels of excellence.”

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The Vineland Regional Dance Company Board of Directors will present its 30th annual Dinner Fashion Show extravaganza on Wednesday, April 21, beginning at 6 p.m. at Merighi’s Savoy Inn, E. Landis Ave. and Union Road in Vineland.

Titled “Project Fashion,” the event will include entertainment by the award winning Vineland Regional Dance Company (VRDC), dinner, table prizes, raffles and fashions for everyone. Boscov’s of Vineland, as well as The Men’s Wearhouse and Rienzi Bridal Salon, will provide a sampling of the newest in spring fashions for men, women, teens and children.

Models will be Patty Barse, Lori Bertacchi, Carmen Bryant, Chelsea Consalo, Denise Consalo, Lori Ebner, Melissa Levari, Cookie Mingin and Janet Streeter. Taman Bryant, Aldo Castanon, Jim Ebner, Gino Fausto, Justin Lilla, Jason Millar, and Andy Maduro. TJ Stratton and Jeff Wetherington will model clothing from The Men’s Wearhouse along with a special appearance by Vineland Mayor Robert Romano.

Children’s wear will be modeled by Adam Anthony, Gabe and Sophia Baldosaro, Lauren Ebner, Michael James, Sydney Jones, Billie Mattioli, Jackie O’Rourke, Carolina Sharp and Ali Sholders. Jana Ferrari. VRDC dancers Erin Kane and Elizabeth Tkaczynski will model prom wear.

Tickets are $40 per person, a portion of which is tax deductible. All proceeds go toward the dancers’ scholarship fund.

As a tax-exempt, non-profit organization, the VRDC is partially funded by a grant from the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission, through the Board of Chosen Freeholders, and the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

For tickets or more information, contact the VRDC (856) 691-6059 or visit www.vrdc.org.

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**Save the Date!**

**April 16**
Millville Third Friday-Restaurants, shops open late; teen art show at Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts

**April 17**
Maurice River Music salon concert
Pianist Richard Alston, “My To Do Liszt”
7:30 p.m.; 856-506-0580

**April 30**
Multicultural Festival,
Millville Glasstown Plaza, 6 p.m.

**May 1**
Bay Atlantic Symphony
“Retro & Barbaric” concert, 8 p.m.
Cumberland County College-Violin and cello soloists Ruotao Mao and Jie Jin
856-692-8499

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**Festival gives teens new artistic outlet**
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cancelled because of major cuts in arts funding from the state. (See box on page 1.) The Festival gives teens the opportunity to participate in arts-themed activities, and the Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts is dedicating its Pat Witt Gallery to artwork from teens in Cumberland County as part of Millville’s Third Friday on April 16.

For more information on the Multicultural Festival, call 800-887-4957.

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