



CULTURE ON THE COMMON: This weekend's Salem CultureFest to deliver international flair

By Larry Claflin Jr.
Staff writer

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Reggae singers, West-African drummers and dancers from around the world will converge on Salem Common on Saturday and Sunday, during the third-annual Salem CultureFest, an event organizers say is an international alternative to the Witch City's Halloween fare.

Joining the performers will be artisans selling wares from their respective countries, and an International Food Court will offer choices from more than 16 North Shore restaurants.

"Through art and culture, we believe people can experience connection and understanding," said Debra Crosby, a CultureFest organizer and the vice president of A3D Inc., or African Development Through Drum and Dance, the nonprofit organization running the event. "We're going to be on the Common, and we should celebrate common ground there," she added.

In response to feedback from 2007's CultureFest, more family and child-friendly activities have been included, Crosby said.

Each day will begin at 10 a.m. when the It's a Small World/Kids' section opens with clowns, magicians, pony rides, hopscotch and face painting. Saltonstall, Nathaniel Bowditch and Carlton schools will each be represented in tents with games and participatory arts and crafts like hair wrapping, drum, mask and sand-art making and more.

Music lovers can groove to the tunes of the Lance Houston Jazz Quartet, Mystafine, a reggae, hip-hop and soul band, and the Mamadou Band, a West-African, drum-based group led by Mamadou Diop, a native of Senegal and the president of A3D.

Diop said that CultureFest serves as a way to bring people back to their cultures and provides a learning experience.

"If you don't know where you're from, you get lost," he said, adding that the festival helps further a major goal for A3D — opening a multicultural center on the North Shore.

In addition to live music, Russian and Ukrainian folk dancers will perform as well as Flamenco and belly dancers. And Salsa dancing clinics will take place as well as a dance kinetics demonstration.

According to Crosby, A3D will donate 10 percent of proceeds from CultureFest to a Salem School foundation to ensure that art and cultural programming continue in Salem schools. Also, the festival will help to raise money for A3D's next cultural-exchange trip to West Africa, planned for early 2009.

"(CultureFest) is a family-friendly, fun event," Crosby said. "It brings true meaning to the phrase 'act locally and think globally.'"

If you go

What: Salem CultureFest

When: Saturday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Where: Salem Common, Washington Square, Salem

How much: Free

Info.: <http://npo.a3dinc.org/content/view/52/80/>

Salem CultureFest schedule of events

Saturday

11:30 a.m., National Anthem sung by LaQuandra Seymore .

11:45 a.m., drumming with A3D, led by Mamadou Diop .

Noon, Debra Crosby's Talent Quest Showcase .

12:45 p.m., Ukrainian dancers, presented by the Youth Talent School .

2 p.m., Lance Houston Jazz Quartet

4 p.m., Mystafine

6 p.m., Joh Camara, master drummer

6:30 p.m., Mamadou Band

Sunday

11:30 a.m., National Anthem sung by Jaclyn Sabogal .

11:45 a.m., drumming with A3D, led by Mamadou Diop .

1 p.m., Sisters In Dance

2:15 p.m., The Jolly Rogues

4:15 p.m. Kabu Jazz Trio, featuring Candida Rose

5:45 p.m., closing remarks

Also, CinemaSalem, a CultureFest sponsor, will screen a culturally significant film on Friday at 8 p.m. on the Common. A full schedule of events can be viewed at A3D's Web site.

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Photos



A child gets her face painted at last year's Salem CultureFest. Courtesy photo



Drum circles are a CultureFest highlight. Courtesy photo



Pony rides will be offered at CultureFest on Saturday. Courtesy photo