University School Celebrates Cultural Diversity

BY STACEY BOMSER

MUCH LIKE THE SOUTH FLORIDA community in which we live, the student body at University School of Nova Southeastern University is culturally diverse with more than 50 nationalities represented. Throughout the school year, each division recognizes the students’ unique cultural, ethnic and racial diversity.

The Lower School hosts a Cultural Diversity Week each February which culminates with the Cultural Unity Fair. Students “tour” the world visiting booths on different countries, learning its heritage, sampling its foods and experiencing its culture.

The Middle School incorporates a segment on cultural diversity in its weekly news program. According to Middle School Director Dr. Steven Blinder, each month a different culture is recognized to help raise awareness and appreciation of the diverse cultures represented at University School. In addition, the school sponsors several culturally-based clubs, including the Indian Heritage Club which is coordinating a school-wide activity in March to celebrate the Hindu festival of Holi.

The Upper School recently hosted an International Night: A Taste of Nations. The school holds this annual event because it values the strong spirit of identity, unity, community and personal pride that it generates.

“International Night provides an opportunity for our students, their parents, and our staff to step onto the stage and share their family heritage through song, dance and prose. It is always followed by a ‘Taste of Nations’ which is a time for parents and their children to share a sample of their cultural dishes,” explains Dr. Donna Poland, Upper School Director.

The evening featured a Parade of Nations, with students presenting flags from more than 50 countries. That was Bijan Abae’s favorite part of the night. “I think that meant a great deal to (the students) and their families to watch their children stand there with pride of their country, and it was a very special moment to have flags of many different countries all on one stage,” said the tenth grader from Davie.
A Parade of Nations featuring more than 50 countries kicked off the International Night festivities at University School.

He shared his French culture by singing one of his favorite French songs, “Derniere Danse.” This performance was one of many cultural presentations by University School students. Junior Edward Chiang, from Davie, wowed the audience with his Taiwanese yoyo tricks.

Other highlights included musical performances, dances, and even a rap by Benjamin Katz, an eleventh grader from Weston. His “Unity Rap” spread the message that peace around the world, between all countries, will make this world a better place.

Following the entertainment, everyone was invited to sample a smorgasbord of traditional foods prepared by students and their families. “The different tastes and foods were the best part of the night,” states Chiang. “After watching and experiencing the different cultures across the globe, it is a great feeling to have a taste of the best foods from that country.”

“Seeing dances, songs, and eating unique ethnic foods definitely opened my eyes as to what cultures we have in our school and more importantly, in the world,” shared Katz.

The International Night festivities were hosted by the University School’s World Language Department, the French and Spanish Honor Societies, and the Student Diversity Leadership Association, with the help of a parent committee.