

Students celebrate Asian culture in Chinese festival

By Nin-Hai Tseng
Alligator Writer

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Chinese traditional fan and lion dances will take the Reitz Union Ballroom stage this evening in celebration of the Chinese Moon Festival.

The event, sponsored by the Chinese American Student Association, is part of Asian Kaleidoscope Month, which aims to promote Asian culture and awareness.

Alen Hsu, president of the association, said this year's festival will celebrate Chinese as well as American culture.

"America is a 'melting pot' and we should celebrate that," Hsu said. "We want to propagate our own culture and at the same time learn about other cultures."

Hsu said the Chinese festival celebrates

the day when the moon is at its fullest, which usually lands on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month.

This year's Moon Festival will be held later than usual because of the extra month in a Chinese lunar calendar.

Hsu said to many Chinese, the full moon's round shape symbolizes "abundance, harmony and luck," as well as a time for family reunions.

"Traditionally, family and friends come together to gaze at the full moon and eat moon cake," said Hsu, adding that the miniature cakes are filled with lotus-seed paste or red-bean paste with a salted egg yolk in the middle.

Tonight's festival begins at 8 p.m. at the Reitz Union Ballroom and is free for all UF students.

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Festival kicks off tonight

Historic Gainesville will transform into a colorful marketplace tonight as the 20th Annual Downtown Festival and Arts Show hits the town.

The festival, held between City Hall and the Hippodrome State Theatre, kicks off tonight at 7 with a free Downtown Festival Blues Concert by the Gainesville Friends of Jazz and Blues.

The festival will continue through the weekend with live performances on three stages, featuring a variety of music from folk and country to pop and soul.

"The Downtown Festival Blues Concert is the perfect appetizer to a weekend-long entertainment extravaganza," Entertainment Coordinator Bill Hutchinson stated in a press release.

Each year, the event draws more than 100,000 spectators as artists

from all over the country display their artwork for sale and competition.

Event Coordinator Linda Piper said the Department of Cultural Affairs received more than 600 applications competing for 250 booth spaces, so patrons can expect to find "a variety of unique and high-quality fine artwork."

Artists will compete for more than \$15,000 in prizes.

The festival's "Imagination Station" will offer children more than a dozen hands-on activities, including sidewalk chalk drawing, mask design and puppet making. This area devoted entirely to children also will feature magic shows and sing-alongs.

For more information, contact the Department of Cultural Affairs at 334-2787.

—Jenny L. Allen

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