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UMD Fiesta celebrates Latino culture

APRIL 15, 2016 BY HANNAH BROADBENT

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Behind colorful banners, celebratory music and the aroma of authentic food lies a story of a culture passing on its traditions from one generation to the next.

This is similar to what you will find at UMD's 27th Annual Fiesta on Friday, April 15, at 5:00 p.m.

The event is as authentic to Latino culture as possible, featuring a silent auction, live entertainment, food and a dance.

Susana Pelayo-Woodward, Director of the UMD Office of Cultural Diversity has attended all 27 Fiestas. Her first Fiesta took place when she was a student at UMD in 1985.

"There were very few Latino students my first year at UMD. As a result of this, we decided to get together and celebrate various holidays and traditions. The Fiesta was one of them. It has been going on ever since," Pelayo-Woodward said.

Over the years, Pelayo-Woodward has watched as the festivals have evolved.

"Duluth has a small Latino community, but it is present. Fortunately, many people from the community come. Some members of the community are coming from all over. It is very exciting," Pelayo-Woodward said.

Though the event has been held on campus in UMD's Ballroom in the past, it will be held off campus in Greysolon Plaza this year, due to the construction of the Dining Center. Despite the change of location, the event will be a hit.

"We sold out right away," freshman Jeyca Maldonado-Medina said.

Maldonado-Medina is a second generation immigrant whose parents are both from Puerto Rico. She holds her cultural background close to her heart.

"My culture is something that I feel adds to my experience. Not only was I born into a Puerto Rican family, but I was also born in America. Because of this, I was able to learn a lot about both cultures growing up. I'd say that it was the best of both worlds," Maldonado-Medina said.

A Journalism major and English minor, Maldonado-Medina is the freshman representative of the Executive Board for the Latino/Chicano Student Association. This year she served as the head of entertainment for the Fiesta.

"We looked for performers, held auditions, etc," Maldonado-Medina said.

This year, there will be a Mariachi band as well as a Mexican folk dance group.

"Our hope is that people come and have a good time. For those that don't know the culture well, we hope that they see something new or exciting," Maldonado-Medina said.

"We only wish that there were more tickets," Pelayo-Woodward added.

Tickets for the event this Friday, April 15 at 5:00 are \$10.00 for students and \$15.00 for the general public.

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