

It's a cultural thing

By Rebecca Fishow

The mission of Latinos Unidos De New Hampshire, the group organizing the Sixth Annual Latino Festival (Aug. 19-20), is to "provide and share cultural awareness of the Latino Community in New Hampshire through an annual Latino Festival."

As in past years, the event will feature Latino culture, music, food and entertainment, with an emphasis on the sounds of Colombia, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Uruguay and Peru.

"I think [residents] like to see the different cultures," said Peter Escalera, spokesman for Latinos Unidos De New Hampshire. "What's unique about the Latino Festival is we invite the whole state — Greeks, Irish, Italian, French — to see and enjoy different foods, displayed art. The more we know of each other, the less fear we have of one another."

One of the biggest attractions of the festival is undoubtedly the authentic ethnic food. Vendors will be cooking up a storm. The festival is the perfect opportunity to try Caribbean-style peas and rice, fried bananas, Bastille and other uniquely scrumptious Latino dishes in their most authentic form.

Because of rain, last year's turnout at the festival was only a couple hundred. But the year before, close to 5,000 people came to enjoy and celebrate Latino culture. Latinos Unidos De New Hampshire anticipates an even larger crowd this year.

The day before the Latinos festival, Aug. 19 is parade day. The Latino Festival parade will be walking from Victory Park to City Hall at noon. Upon arrival at City Hall, Mayor Bob Baines is expected to make a proclamation, declaring a Latino Day for Manchester.

It's a music thing

By Jason Singer

The Sixth Annual Latino Festival will salsa into the Queen City's Veterans Park Friday and Saturday, Aug. 19-20.

A parade on Elm Street Friday afternoon (12:30-2 p.m.), a Festival Gala Dance at the Executive Court Banquet & Conference Center Friday night (7 p.m. to midnight, \$25) and a conglomeration of Latin music bands all day Saturday (noon to 8 p.m., free) highlight the festival.

Esperanza, an Afro-Cuban / Latin Jazz group, hopes to electrify the crowd two times. The group will perform at both the Festival Gala Dance on Friday night and at the festival in Veterans Park on Saturday. The Royal Palace Studio dancers, stationed just a tango or two away down Elm Street, will accompany them.

Dancing will highlight the multinational festival. Following Esperanza, dance groups from Mexico, Uruguay, Columbia and Puerto Rico will perform, and there will be a rendition of the Argentine Tango.

"The festival will attempt to represent most of the major ethnic groups in the city," said stage manager Alberto Ortiz.

Columbians, of which Manchester possesses a sizeable constituency, will be well-represented: Grupo Melao will perform Saturday in addition to some of that country's dancers. Named after the saccharine product in sugar cane, the band hopes that their melodies will please the crowd.

Mexican folk musicians Los Paisanos will headline the afternoon. Los Paisanos specializes in ballads, boleros and rancheros deeply associated with Mexican culture. "What we're trying to do for the people is to not forget the culture, forget the traditions," says leader of the band Manuel Cavazos.

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Latino Festival schedule

Friday, Aug. 19

Noon: Parade on Elm Street

Saturday, Aug. 20, in Veterans Park, Elm Street.

Noon-12:10 p.m.: Welcome ceremony with Grand Marshall Shirley Brien
12:10-12:55 p.m.: Esperanza Band (Latin jazz) and Royal Palace Dance Studio
1-1:15 p.m.: Ballet Montealban with Veronica Robles and Grupos Mexico
1:15-1:30 p.m.: Ballet Montealban with Veronica Robles and Grupos Puerto Rico
1:30-1:45 p.m.: Racies Uruguayas
1:45-1:55 p.m.: Colombianos De Corazon (dance)
1:55-2:05 p.m.: Monte Uru
2:05-2:20 p.m.: Semillitas De Colombia (dance)
2:20-2:35 p.m.: ALPHA Dance Group
2:35-2:45 p.m.: Cameron Bennett and Cindy Grove dance the Argentine Tango
2:45-3 p.m.: Royal Palace Dance Studio
3:05-3:15 p.m.: DEFENIX (Reggaeton)
3:25-4:05 p.m.: Los Paisanos (Mexican band)
4:10-4:25 p.m.: Stealth Bombs (hip-hop)
4:35-5:15 p.m.: Grupo Melao
5:25-5:40 p.m.: Rhimesick Prod (Reggaeton)
5:45-7 p.m.: Salsa Night Band
7:10-8:10 p.m.: Alexander Band