

2009 HoLa Festival Report

HoLa Hora Latina held the 2009 HoLa Festival on Saturday, September 19 in beautiful and historic Market Square. It was a wonderful and very successful event that marked the 10th year anniversary of the HoLa Festival. Attendance at the festival was record breaking, with 10,000-15,000 people packing Market Square, Market Street, Krutch Park and Krutch Park extension, throughout the day. Post festival reviews highlighted the fun and family friendly atmosphere, the diversity of festival attendees, and the vast opportunities to share and learn about Hispanic cultures.

Unquestionably, the spotlight this year was on children. An influx of young families had a great time and enjoyed carnival games, crafts, puppets by the Bonilla family, face painting, Passport activity, Home Depot's wood shop, the Zoomobile, Chagy the Clown, a Hispanic clown who came all the way from Texas to be at the festival, and a very special visit from Nickelodeon's Dora the Explorer, thanks to Comcast. Others that helped make the children's activities such a success included: Target, Event Rentals and International Flair.

Live entertainment took place on two different stages. The variety of music and dance presentations pleased a diverse range of tastes. We are proud to have received a grant from Southern Arts Federation, in partnership with the Tennessee Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts, to bring Vientos del Pueblo and the music of the Andes to Knoxville. Other sounds heard in downtown Knoxville on that day included Salsa (Kazique), Reaggeton (Andy Maldonado) and Mariachi (Trio Zúñiga). We also had Zumba, an exercise program to Latin music, and a demonstration by Capoeira Fundo da Mata, a martial arts native to Brazil. Dance demonstrations included: SalsaKnox, which energized the audience and led an improvised Salsa and Bachata class for several hundred festival attendees; Grupo Folklórico Santa Cruz, performing traditional Mexican dances; Flamenco by Lucia Arte y Pasión, and Tango by Knoxville Argentine Tango Society.

Festival attendees were able to "travel" through the Countries and Heritage section and enjoy beautiful displays of crafts and arts from 23 different countries and also to learn, in a fun way, from the informational displays. In this section, students from many local schools participated in the Passport activity collecting flag stickers, as well as a scavenger's hunt that encouraged learning facts about the different countries. We are grateful to Akima Club and the local Farragut, Catholic, and Karns High School students, among others, who volunteered in the Countries and Heritage section.

HoLa's Parade of Nations brings a singular cultural experience to East Tennessee and this year's was no exception. Market Square was full of colorful and elaborate traditional costumes from various regions of Latin American countries and Spain. Sprinkled throughout the parade were folk dances from Peru, Colombia, Honduras, and even Easter Island!

Sixteen food vendors offered delicious authentic food from countries like Colombia, Mexico, Honduras, Argentina, Costa Rica, Venezuela, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Bolivia. We are grateful to Pepsi and Tecate for being the soft drink and beer sponsors.

Some of the sponsors' booths included US Cellular, University of Tennessee, Bush Brothers, AmeriChoice, Clayton Homes, KAAR, East Tennessee Children's Hospital, Safe Kids, and Mi Banco. The Community Fair section offered a unique opportunity to share important information with the community. Among the participants this year included: Kidney Foundation, Catholic Charities, Knox County Public Library, March of Dimes, Legal Aid of ET, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce of ET, Knox County Health Department, Birth to Kindergarten Program, American Red Cross, the FBI, and others.

Besides the sponsors already mentioned above, many others made this event possible, as well as other activities during Hispanic Heritage Month. The extensive list includes: City of Knoxville, Knox County, Central Business Improvement District, TVA, Regal Entertainment, UT-Battelle, Scripps Networks, Mercy Health Partners, First Tennessee Foundation, Clayton Foundation, 21st Mortgage Corporation, Sound Ventures, WBIR, News Sentinel, Journal Broadcast Group, WUOT, WKZX, Mundo Hispano, MiVidaToday, Hola Tennessee, Market Square District Association, Wackenhut Services Inc-Oak Ridge, and many others.

Thanks to our sponsors, we are able to offer the festival without charging admission. This year, we asked festival attendees to help us give back to this community, which gives us so much. We held a food drive to benefit Second Harvest Food Bank and we are proud to announce that we collected 1,504 pounds of food!

There were other activities that took place throughout Hispanic Heritage Month. The Opening Ceremony and Latino Art Exhibit took place at the Knoxville Museum of Art on September 15. We are grateful to Charter Communications for sponsoring this meaningful event. HoLa's "Unity in the Community" awards were presented to TVA, the University of Tennessee, Scripps Networks, and HoLa members Ana Luisa Salinas, Margarita Yong, and Patricia Robledo.

The very last event for this year's Hispanic Heritage month was in celebration of the literary arts. On October 20, we held Meet the Authors Hispanic Book Day at Barnes & Noble with presentations by published authors Joyce Wyatt, Dawn Duke, and Harriet Wood-Bowden. Their books were either in Spanish or had a connection to Hispanic culture.

HoLa Hora Latina is very thankful to the many volunteers and sponsors, which made it possible for HoLa to facilitate the exchange of culture and valuable information, which benefited the community as a whole. We are proud to be part of this great community of Knoxville, Knox County and East Tennessee.

¡Viva Knoxville!

Coral Getino

2009 HoLa Festival Chair