

Clifton, NJ Family Church's first World Cultural Festival of Unificationists

Naokimi Ushiroda
September 4, 2021



"This was the first World Cultural Festival we ever had, and it's about recognizing that the Unificationist community is made up of cultures from all around the world," said Yasutaka Ozawa. "We were able to showcase the unique beauty of Thai, Filipino, Japanese, African, and Hispanic cultures among several others."

Though Ozawa, a young Unificationist, worked mostly behind the scenes to premier the World Cultural Festival over Labor Day Weekend, he says the event was an exciting opportunity for him and the greater Clifton, New Jersey, community to learn more about the heritage of so many people.

"We had quite a few booths set up that had authentic food from different countries, as well as informational posters and cultural games for children," said Ozawa. "You got to eat a lot of different kinds of food, and that always puts a smile on people's faces."

The festival, held September 4 in Weasel Brook Park, drew more than 400 people with its wide range of cultural dances and musical performances. The event also featured a basketball and volleyball tournament.

"Sports is something that is enjoyed across all cultures," said Ozawa, an administrative assistant of Pastor Crescentia DeGoede, who was among the organizers from the Clifton Family Church. "People also enjoyed the performances we had happening the whole time we were at the park," he said. "Performers were dressed in cultural attire and some did traditional dances and performed to songs in their native

language."

Weasel Brook Park is a 19-acre recreation area located near the Clifton Family Church, which is home to the largest Unificationist community in the U.S. The Unification movement, officially known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU), has a global presence on six continents and in more than 150 nations. Founded by the late Rev. Dr. Sun Myung Moon and his wife Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon in 1954, the international movement comprises people from all backgrounds and beliefs, transcending barriers of race, nationality, religion, and ideology.



For Naria Gaarder, a young Unificationist who attended the event wearing a traditional Japanese kimono representing her heritage, the World Cultural Festival is a great way to educate, entertain, and bring together an array of cultures.

"I really love things related to international culture and learning about it, so this kind of event always piques my interest," said Gaarder. "I was surprised to see how many ethnic groups were represented there and the great assortment of international foods."

"I especially liked the Japanese grilled squid and cream puffs and the Filipino rice cakes," she said, "but I think the best part was the performances, which engaged the audience to join and learn the dances as well."

Ozawa says the festival was such a big hit that local organizers now plan to make it an annual event.

"It was a wonderful atmosphere of seeing such diverse representation," said Ozawa. "This shows people are able to work together beyond any cultural differences."

You can view more photos from the World Cultural Festival in Clifton [here](#).

Our First World Culture Festival

Saturday September 4th, 2021

We had a beautiful Saturday event last weekend at our very first World Culture Festival. We had different ethnic groups from Thai, the Phillipines, Japan, Korea, Africa and Latinos: all expressing what makes them unique about their culture. Each culture also performed their authentic dance or song.

Everyone had a good time and had a vibrant energy. There are already talks of having another one in the following year.

