

Thursday, February 4, 2010

All invited to celebrate African American culture at “Taste of Africa Gala”

By **Katie Land**, news editor

Oakland University students, staff, faculty and the general community are invited to the annual cultural and culinary celebration, “Taste of Africa Gala,” set for 4-7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 12, in the Oakland Center Banquet Rooms.

The gala is the signature event during Oakland University’s recognition of national African American Celebration Month. This year’s theme, “Creating the African American Community: Family, Spirituality, Politics & Culture,” offers a series of events and speakers through Thursday, Feb. 18.

“The gala can be a monumental event. In the right hands, it can inspire and shape the destiny of a village; preparing the next generation of leaders,” said Kenyettera Junior, senior accountant and chair of the gala. “Our objective is to bring attention to the necessary changes and diversity required to reach the desired pinnacle. It is imperative to receive the input of others and to continually meet the needs of the leaders of tomorrow.”

The Taste of Africa Gala provides samples of soul food, Caribbean fare, traditional African American influenced food and African cooking, as well as desserts and beverages targeted to reflect various cultures and regions.

A full evening of entertainment is planned, including African drummers, African dancers, tap dancing, stepping, singing, spoken word and two educational pieces presented by OU professors. The first educational piece will outline the slave trade and the second will analyze political, social and historical issues relating to modern day Africa.

“The success of the event is predicated on the participation of the students, the community and the collaboration of the faculty and staff. If just one person walks away engaged, enlightened, or contemplating ways to benefit their community, it will be well worth it,” Junior said.

Event planners anticipate the largest attendance yet, with 600-800 guests from Oakland University and the surrounding communities. This would be a boost up from half as many guests just a few years ago. Junior attributes this growth to reaching out into the community, changing the event from an OU community based function to one that welcomes everyone.

“The event has been exploding over the past few years,” said Bridget Green, assistant director for the Center for Multicultural Initiatives. “The gala is the centerpiece of OU’s African American celebration. We are very proud to showcase our student groups as they provide a portion of the entertainment.”

The CMI office hosts the entire AACM, along with volunteers made up of Oakland University’s faculty, staff and students. The seventh annual Taste of Africa Gala Committee is sponsored by the Student Programming Board, Public School Academies, University Housing, Government Relations and the University Student Congress.

The gala is free and open to the university community and the public. Visit oakland.edu/aacm for more information.

SUMMARY

The signature event during African American Celebration Month offers a series of engaging activities and speakers.

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