

A richness of culture

In a surprisingly short period of time, Loudoun County has grown from a sleepy, largely rural, largely white area to a vibrant, multi-ethnic exurb of Washington, D.C. According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, since 2000, the population of Loudoun County has grown 84 percent to about 340,000 people.

However, this masks the rapid and substantial changes in our ethnic make-up. For example, from 2000 to the 2010 census, the African-American population grew 94 percent, while the Asian population increased by 408 percent, and the Hispanic/Latino population grew 282 percent. Today, in Loudoun County, almost 30 percent of the households speak a language in addition to English. In 2012, 22.4 percent of the population was foreign-born.

The dramatic growth in diversity has had a salubrious effect on the county. We benefit from the blend of cultures that can inspire and enrich our own. It expands our horizons with myriad learning opportunities about different cultures and nationalities, fresh thinking about science and how to minimize conflict.

Our children are exposed to people who look different, may speak another language, eat different foods, sing different songs and play different games. Our economy benefits from the skills, expertise, initiative and energy of our diverse immigrant workforce. Yet for all the differences, it all blends together in a stew of many flavors that enhance each other.

Put another way, Loudoun culture is becoming a magnificent tapestry of designs and colors, of sights and sounds,

tastes, scents and textures, with endless creative possibilities. This is something we should celebrate and embrace for it contributes to the vitality and vibrancy of our community.

This diversity also serves to underscore a key value of American culture: With diversity comes a recognition that in America we are all, in our differing capacities, contribute equally to the ongoing project of building a livable community.

Therefore, we should all have equal access to the various avenues for making that contribution. In other words, by embracing diversity we can come to a recognition of our equality, that we are all, at a fundamental level, equal to one another, just as described by the founders of the Republic. And what can be more American than that?

We thought that a way our community could express and celebrate the value of diversity and equality would be a free, public fair; a family-friendly, one-day event to be held in Ida Lee Park on Oct. 10, 2015. To realize this goal, we formed a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation called Diversity Fairs of Virginia. The fair will include entertainment, food and other items that express and make available to all who attend the richness of culture available in Loudoun County.

We hope to see broad participation by the general public and representatives of the many ethnic and national groups that make up a large part of the community.

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Diversity Fairs of Virginia

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