

Festivals spotlight ethnic groups' vibrant cultures

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The Journal News

The trees and grass weren't the only things green at Ridge Road Park in Hartsdale yesterday.

About 3,000 people clad in various shades of green attended the American-Irish Association of Westchester's 26th annual Heritage Day.

"It's a great day to be Irish," said association President Anna Madden. "It's a great day for everyone to get together and remember their Irish heritage."

The event began at noon with a Mass in Gaelic. The rest of the afternoon was dedicated to noshing on corned beef and cabbage, sipping Guinness stouts and browsing the 16 vendor booths selling Celtic charms, Clatter rings and knit sweaters.

"This is much more intimate than the St. Patrick's Day Parade. We get to see all our friends," said Gene Smith of White Plains, wearing a green top, shamrock pin and Clatter earrings. "We love the music."

Hundreds gathered around the main stage to listen to Celtic bands, pipes and drummers and the clip-clop of step dancers from the O'Rourke Academy of Irish Dance.

The 16 young women and girls sporting curly locks and traditional Celtic velvet dresses with satin lining and colorful embroidery entertained spectators with their fancy footwork.

Kelly Rosenow, 18, one of the step dancers, said she was prompted to join the White Plains troupe after attending Irish festivals with her family.

"We mostly do competitions," said Rosenow, of North White Plains. "This festival is fun because we get to see the reaction on people's faces. Everyone is just having a good time."

Irish, Slavic heritage hailed

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Photos by Tom Nycz/The Journal News
Angelica Hanley, left, and Kelly Clare of the O'Rourke Academy of Irish Dance perform yesterday at the American-Irish Association of Westchester's Irish Heritage Day at Ridge Road Park in Hartsdale.