

Alliance celebrates 10 years of harmony

By ROEL GARCIA

The Holland Sentinel

Posted Aug 09, 2009 @ 11:16 PM

Holland, MI —



Mayor Al McGeehan speaks at the Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony's Anniversary Celebration, while Marvin Younger, president of the alliance, stands next to him.

It's been 10 years of advocacy, networking and education in an increasingly diverse community for the Alliance for Cultural and Ethnic Harmony.

The group celebrated with a potluck event at the Kollen Park bandshell Sunday afternoon. About 100 came out to participate in the fellowship.

The group aims to make people feel like they belong in the community. It's something that attracted founding member Bin Lim, who arrived in Holland in 1976. Lim says he felt like "an outsider" even though he was treated well.

"I can have my voice be heard," Bin said, smiling. "This group is what I had been waiting for."

The group began with about 50 people meeting in David and Kim Douglas' living room. The first official meeting was in January 1999.

Over the years, the group has grown to about 150 members with information going out to 1,000 people.

The group brings in speakers and hosts events throughout the community to educate people about cultural differences, said Marvin Younger, the group's president.

"We wanted to educate people about cultures and differences as well as all the things we share in common," Younger said.

Sunday's event featured a variety of food, kids' games, a pinata, music and a time for people to talk and catch up with one another.

Ann Weller sat under the shade of trees and watched as kids ran and friends talked around her. There was a look of contentment on her face.

Weller, a founding member of the group, likes where the alliance is headed and sees a bright future.

"There is momentum," Weller said. "Marvin's enthusiastic as president and people are hearing about it more."

Younger is working to get more young people involved in the group. Yessenia Aguirre, a Hope College student, joined the alliance about a month ago.

"Their goals and motivations are very much what I believe," Aguirre said "They're very respectful and receptive to what we (the youth) have to say."
