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Celebrate International Women's Day Sunday in Rochester

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Brighton, N.Y. — Hats — symbolic of the many roles women fill — are the center of the second Rochester International Women's Day celebration this Sunday.

A variety of extraordinary and exotic hats in wearable art form, from Hat Horizons, will be featured throughout the event which also includes cultural music, international food, dance and activities for children.

"The hat exhibit is in honor of the fact that women wear many hats," said Jamie Columbus of Brighton, event chair. "Hats tell stories of different cultures by their ornamentation."

She said decorations including beads, metal pieces, colors and pompoms can symbolize different things such as the wealth of a person, marital status or a particular passage in life.

Stacy Miller of Hat Horizons (www.hathorizons.com) will feature several different hats from her collection of more than 1,000. She said the committee selected hats as the 2010 theme because they have significance beyond their artistic value.

"Not only does the variety of shapes and materials reflect human ingenuity and creativity, but knowledge of the hat itself provides insight into a culture," Miller said. "While hats can instill an awareness and appreciation within and across cultural boundaries, they also act as a bridge, reinforcing personal, spiritual and social values that we, as humans, share."

Columbus said there will also be Bollywood Dance Mania, a DJ, blessings, a demonstration of the Goddess makeup line, Native American hair designs, henna hand art and a raffle. Several dance troupes will also perform, including students ages 6 to 9 from Trinity Montessori School in East Rochester, singing "Hats" and "Many Places, Many Faces." The children will wear hats made for them by Alice Pylko of Pittsford, a retired costume designer from Rochester Institute of Technology. Visitors may also make their own hats with artist Cheryl Bagley.

"There's something for everybody," said Columbus, who founded the local celebration last year with an exhibit of photographs from 42 countries. "This is a very interactive festival for everybody."

Brighton Town Justice Karen Morris and Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks will present proclamations recognizing Rochester International Women's Day, in conjunction with the celebration of March as Women's History Month.

Columbus said International Women's Day activities grow each year worldwide with 984 events last year in 64 countries. The day is an international holiday in more than a dozen countries.

This year, Rochester is also including men in recognition of the support they provide in women's lives.

"We're delighted to put Rochester on the map by celebrating this event," Columbus said. "This celebration brings together people from diverse backgrounds and countries to meet one another and appreciate one another by learning through the music, songs, food and hats. My dream is to enhance people's understanding of our neighbors around the world."

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