

CINCO DE MAYO

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Introduction

July 4, the day that the US declared its independence. Can you imagine not having a day which we as Americans recognize as the day we declared our freedom? People from countries the world over celebrate their day of independence. We celebrate this day each year with gatherings in backyards and parks; we reenact famous battles; we have picnics and play games; and we end this wonderful celebration with a spectacular display of fireworks.

Our neighbor to the south, Mexico, celebrates the day it began its fight against invading French forces May 5, 1862. In Spanish May 5 is Cinco de Mayo which has become the name of the festivities that are held to commemorate the struggle for freedom. As Mexicans have moved north they have brought with them this wonderful celebration and all of its traditions.

Kosciusko County is now the home to many people from Mexico, as well as other Hispanic countries. People of Hispanic descent comprise the largest minority population in our county. It is time that the people of our county recognize their presence and the role that the largest minority plays in our community. To do this we need to know who they are and there is no better way to get to know someone than a party, or in this case, a fiesta. Denise Beno and I invite you to share with us the cultural diversity that is here in Kosciusko County. We have three points of discussion: an introduction to the Hispanic community; the planning of a Cinco de Mayo festival; and the publicity to promote this event.

Point 1

As mentioned in the introduction, people of Hispanic descent comprise the largest minority in Kosciusko County. While most of them are from Mexico, there are many here from other Latin American countries too. According to the most recent census data there are more than 1300 residents of Hispanic descent; however, it is believed that there are many more than this who are not accounted for and that the actual numbers are well over 2000.

Some have been here for a very short time but there are many who are the children or grandchildren of immigrants and are well established in this county. While some come here as migrant farm workers others have deep roots and have permanent jobs or are business owners, such as tax preparers, grocery store operators and car lot owners. In Milford there is a church for people of Hispanic descent and several other churches have Hispanic ministries. The Spanish World Gospel Mission is based in Winona Lake. The local radio station offers Hispanic programming on Sunday evenings.

Obviously, the influence of Hispanic people in our community is far reaching and yet still largely unnoticed by most of us.

Point 2

The goal of KLA is to increase our knowledge of our county, of our community, of who we are and who we want to become so that we can become leaders. We can not accomplish this if we do not recognize and embrace that we are many different kinds of people. Among us are people who have different traditions. We can not just expect

them to erase their culture, just as we have not erased ours, but we need to understand them so that we can get to know them. Denise spear-headed the effort to increase our awareness of the cultural differences that exist in Kosciusko County. Because the Hispanic community is the largest minority it made sense that a celebration of their culture would be appropriate. She began planning a Cinco de Mayo festival. Frank Perales, who performs the Sunday evening Spanish broadcast for WRSW, and I later joined Denise.

Like any event the Cinco de Mayo fiesta would require money. Denise wrote a proposal and received grant money from the Kosciusko Foundation. She also approached Maple Leaf Farms, a significant employer of Hispanics, who made a sizable contribution.

Once there was a budget we met each week for the last two months to plan. Many others who know the local Hispanic community have offered input. From the research and the input a full day of activities are scheduled. A mariachi band and the featured entertainer tejano singer Maria Rosa will be the top entertainment of the day but there will be several other performers too.

The fiesta would be incomplete if there was no food. Several area vendors are setting up food booths to offer visitors a sampling of Mexican and Hispanic food.

A queen contest will be another highlight of the day. Area teenage girls of Hispanic descent are invited to participate in this contest. A panel of VIP judges will determine who the Queen and runners up will be. The Queen will be awarded a prizes and a tiara, and the runners up will receive prizes too.

Finally, games and activities for the kids have been planned. Local art students are making pinatas and the high school drama students will be putting on a play depicting the meaning of Cinco de Mayo.

Point 3

Once all the activities for the fiesta were planned it was time to begin publicizing for the event. During the planning stage Frank Perales regularly announced the fiesta on WRSW. He received many calls from listeners asking questions about it, and he will continue to make announcements until the day of the event.

We were very excited when the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette picked up the story. On April 8 a front page story was printed describing the fiesta and the need for increasing the community's awareness of the diversity which exists here. As a result of this article, many of the Fort Wayne radio stations made announcements as well.

Closer to home posters printed in Spanish as well as English are being placed all over the county, but especially at locations where it is known that Hispanics frequent. Advertisements will be made on local radio stations the week leading up to the fiesta. Finally, a banner will span Center Street the week prior.

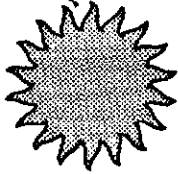
Conclusion

We have covered three points regarding the need to increase the community's awareness of the cultural diversity that exists: an introduction to the Hispanic community of Kosciusko County; the planning of a Cinco de Mayo festival; and the publicizing of the event.

Now we invite you to attend Kosciusko County's first Cinco de Mayo

festival, May 5, from 1-8 at Central Park. Come and learn about another facet of your diverse and wonderful community.

iCINCO DE MAYO



FIESTA!



Sunday, May 5, 1996

1:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M.

Central Park, Warsaw

Music • Food • Dancing

Car Show

Children's Activities • Crafts

Miss Cinco de Mayo Queen Contest

Free Admission!

In the event of rain, the Fiesta will be held
in the Center Lake Pavilion, Warsaw



MARIA ROSA

Financially supported in part by
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For more information call Denise Beno 372-9554, Warsaw Pa. [unclear] ment

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