

Festival brings sounds, food of India to Centennial Terrace

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Kumar Kannan takes naan, a type of leavened bread typically made in a teardrop shape, out of a tandoor oven for sale to eat during The Festival of India at Centennial Terrace.

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Bare feet jumped and dashed across the Centennial Terrace outdoor stage as rhythmic drums blared to a packed audience, nodding with the beat. Traditional dance numbers with roots from all regions of India were only part of what drew thousands to the Sylvania Township venue on Sunday.

The all-day Festival of India boasted dance, food, art, and vibrant clothing to purchase or admire. For northwest Ohio residents who can't travel to India, it's the next best thing.



Elsa Gregory and her 20-year-old daughter Ellie Gregory savored spicy samosas and washed them down with a cool mango lassi as they watched the dancers. The two have attended the festival for the last five years because they want to learn about a culture different from their own.

"This is what the United States is supposed to be, right? A country of different cultures," Mrs. Gregory said. "So this is a great opportunity for everybody to come and experience, since we can't go to India."

Her daughter said she loves watching the various performers, but she also likes to compare Indian culture with her own heritage.

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Shreya Trivedi smiles while listening as the Indian National Anthem is sung.

“We’re Hispanic, and it’s fun to see every different culture, and to see the similarities, too. With the food, there’s the spiciness, and with the music, it’s neat to hear how similar the rhythm is to Hispanic and Spanish music,” she said.

Sylvania resident Dawn Greenwood was raised eating “meat and potatoes,” and is glad the festival makes the food and traditions of another culture accessible to those who didn’t grow up with it.

“I love Indian food. I’ll eat it whenever I get the chance. I love the spice,” she said.

Sunday marked the 28th annual festival, which the Hindu Temple of Toledo has put on since it was founded in 1989. Organizers moved the festival from the temple grounds on King Road to the large, outdoor concert venue in 2014 to reach a broader audience. Shiv Kadur, president of the temple’s executive committee, last week said he expected between 5,000 and 6,000 attendees.

Even with the venue change, festival attendees were invited to stop by and tour the temple to learn about its history and Hinduism.

Preet Kaur and Ishmeet Singh moved from Delhi, India, to Perrysburg two years ago for work. They attended the Festival of India for the first time Sunday. Ms. Kaur said they used it as a way to celebrate the anniversary of India’s independence from the United Kingdom on Aug. 15, 1947.

Ms. Kaur said many organizations and dance groups celebrate Indian culture on a smaller scale throughout Toledo, but Sunday’s festival incorporates all of India’s regions and traditions.

“It makes everyone come together,” she said.

Next year, she said, she hopes to join other dancers on stage.

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