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SMC honored International Women's Day with Matsuri Festival

By Vera Kochan



Photo Vera Kochan

Oakland Taiko performs during SMC International Women's Day event

The Center for Women & Gender Equity, at Moraga's Saint Mary's College, held its first International Women's Day celebration on March 8 with a Matsuri Festival theme. Matsuri is a traditional festival celebrating Japanese deities through dance, shows, parades, and processions.

The celebrations began with a March 6 show titled "Not Yo' Butterfly" featuring author, singer, songwriter, and Japanese Internment Camp survivor, Noboku Miyamoto, who shared her stories, sang her songs, and read

excerpts from her book. The film "100 Years From Mississippi" was screened on March 7 with its director Tarabu Betsurai Kirkland on hand to discuss his mother's escape from the racism and violence in the early 1900s of the South.

"At CWGE, we're committed to addressing gender from an intersectional lens along with other prongs of identity -- particularly race," stated its director Sharon Sabotta. "Tarabu Betsurai Kirkland and Noboku Miyamoto allowed us to enliven this message and

simultaneously touch hearts and minds."

Sabotta, along with SMC student chair Aya Banaja, started the festival out with an all-campus barbecue of Asian food by Good Eating Company. SMC's Ferroggiaro Quad was bordered by various school or student group tables operated by women in honor of the occasion.

Lunar Accessories Handmade Jewelry (Instagram @lunarxaccessories) sold earrings made by a 2nd year SMC student; La Hermandad advertised an upcoming karaoke event at The Intercultural Center; Saint Mary's Against Cancer offered female cancer awareness; Gael Sisterhood's table had all of the components necessary to make a "thank you" card for a special female in one's life; Community Violence Solutions strives to end sexual assault and family violence; SMC Diverse Abilities brings student unity, awareness, and inclusion to students with disabilities.

Additional participants included Student Coalition Against Abuse

and Rape (SCAAR) which holds educational workshops; Residents Hall Associates (students) and Residential Experience (parents) plan and curate on-campus events for students who lack transportation for off-campus fun; the Student Health Center offers urgent care treatment on campus; the BART Bystander Program seeks to stop harassment against train riders; Student Disability Services works with students and staff to provide equitable opportunities; and this month SMC's library highlighted books by and about famous women.

Entertainment was provided by Oakland Taiko, a Japanese drumming group, and the festivities ended with Miyamoto leading the event-goers in an Obon Odori (Ancestral Spirit Dance) intended to remember loved ones and "to say that we all count."

"Having the Obon Odori and taiko drumming to create the ambiance of a Matsuri and an all-campus barbecue on International Women's Day was truly magical,"

said Sabotta. "The idea of that dance is to bring people from all ages and stages of life into a common circle. It's a coming together of sorts, and that is just what happened during IWD. We saw athletes dancing alongside

staff and faculty, who danced alongside students from all walks of life, who might not have otherwise crossed paths with each other, doing a common dance. I hope this will be the first of many IWD festivals at SMC."

Town Goals and Priorities

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negotiating with them to pay for full utility costs and certain capital improvements, continuing to monitor noise decibel readings, developing long-term operational solutions, and recurring financial payments that have increased.

Moraga has onboarded the "new Town Manager with minimum disruption to staff and to operations, and collaboratively streamlined Town Council meetings." Mitnick's first day with

the Town was April 10, 2023. Additional support staff was hired to fill vacancies; the executive team is evolving into a top-notch leadership unit, staff morale continues to improve, Town Council Chamber operational and safety improvements have been implemented, and improvements have been made to staff presentations at Council meetings.

The Town strives to lessen its "impact on the environment by continuing to implement sustainability and resiliency ini-

tiatives and viable strategies in Moraga's Climate Action Plan and in the Town's Facility Energy Generation Study." Staff remains fully committed to implementing energy efficiency projects going forward and has worked on sustainability initiatives throughout the General Plan 2040. An energy consultant is developing a cost proposal to manage the Power Purchasing Agreement RFP process for selection of a Facility Energy Reliability Projects contractor.

Moraga conducted a

"Town Council/Town Manager session focused on effectiveness and organizational competency" by holding a study session, and it approved revised Town Council Protocols.

Lastly, Mitnick's update cites the initiation of "the process of amending the Town-Wide Noise Ordinance" by awarding a Town-Wide Noise Study contract as part of the General Plan 2040 Update process with additional work to carry over into 2024.

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