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SMC honored International Women's Day with Matsuri Festival

By Vera Kochan



2024 Citizen of the Year -- Moraga iKind's Wendell BakerOakland Taiko performs during SMC International Women's Day event Photo Vera Kochan

"Tarabu Betserai Kirkland and Noboku Miyamoto allowed us to enliven this message and simultaneously touch hearts and minds."

Sobotta, 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 @lunaraccessories) 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."

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