Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Folks from Palestine, Spain, Mexico celebrate culture

It was a cultural mash-up, an ethnic callaloo.

If you asked some of those in attendance, they probably would've said in accented English that the event was "awesome."

Gallupians, both those born here and those who have traveled thousands of miles to adopt the

Indian Capital as their own, rushed into heavy embraces at a parade and food booths March 14 at the 2nd annual Multi-Cultural Festival at Miyamura High School.

“I like it. It’s a chance to learn about other cultures,” Jonathan Brown, 17, of Vanderwagen, said. Brown is from Gallup and a student at Zuni High School. “The food is awesome.”

The three-hour affair saw cultures from around the world participate in food tasting, dancing and arts and crafts. People from around McKinley County, young and old, came out to mingle and soak up some culture.

Janice Spiros, a librarian at Miyamura High, believed attendance from students, parents, administrators and outsiders to be in the thousands. There was enough food to serve more than everyone who came out – and then some, Spiros speculated. By the time the event was over, the food was just about gone.

“I am from Ghana,” Nura Nurudeen said. Nurudeen was dressed in traditional Ghanaian clothing. “I am going to college here. Gallup is my home at the moment.”

Attendees at the festival, held in the front entry area and cafeteria of the school, munched on black beans and rice, tikka masala, curry chicken, couscous and drunken noodles from plastic plates. There were students and parents representing Spain, China, Mexico, Ghana, Kenya, Palestine and Lebanon – and of course, the area’s Native American reservations like the Navajo and Zuni. Those in attendance worked up an appetite to soca, mariachi and calypso and reggae music.

“I like it,” Rob Pardo of Kayenta, Ariz., on the Navajo Nation Indian Reservation, said. Pardo attended the parade. “Who would think that something like this could be held in Gallup.”

The event was sheer paradise for xenophiles: 13-year-old Gallup twins David and Daniel Mendoza spotted the East Asian food booth and couldn’t resist. “I’m not even sure what it was, but it was delicious,” Daniel said of a small rice dish. “That’s what makes this so awesome.”

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Sun Correspondent