



Country of Diversity, Options, and Freedom

Cultural Pearls at Belmont Technical College

What do Italian traditions, the Dominican Republic, Hip Hop dance, and Celtic stories have in common? They all could be seen, heard, and experienced during the fourth annual Cultural Pearls event, hosted by Belmont Technical College on March 11. The richness and culturally diverse history of the Ohio Valley was again promoted, appreciated, and recognized by the College faculty, alumni, students, employees, friends, donors, and guests.

“You might ask yourself what is important about diversity. Well, look around you. We all have different heights, features, and physical characteristics. Diversity goes beyond what you can see. Diversity gives you options. When you have options, you are not judgmental, neither angry, nor afraid. Diversity gives you opportunities and freedom. The United States was based on free choices and, because of that, we are a free nation.”, emphasized Belmont Technical College Dean of Student Services, Peter Law.

This year’s theme was Our Region: Introducing Diversity and Acknowledging Culture. Approximately 130 people watched Katelin Clemont, resident of Lansing and 5th grader at St. Joseph Central Grade School, open the event singing “Bottom of the Ocean” by Miley Cyrus.

Anna Hash, *Allegro Dance Company* director, discussed the Italian immigrants’ influence on the Ohio Valley. She took the audience on a touristic journey through Italian cities such as Rome, Milan, and Venice. In addition, through video footage, she presented an interesting historical and archeological tour of traditional festivities such as the *Carnavalle (Carnival)*. Finally, Anna performed the *Tarantella*, a traditional Italian dance.

Salomón Torres, a businessman and native of the Dominican Republic, also had a slide presentation and captivating discussion with the audience regarding Dominican culture, life, and its national sport, baseball. He explained some family differences between the Dominican and American culture.

Bursting energy and radiating enthusiasm, 11 girls took the stage and showed what *Generation of Steppaz*, a premier hip hop dance troupe, is about. They performed a few routines after a brief introduction of the hip hop history and moves evolution.

In conclusion, *Melanie the Seanachie*, an eclectic storyteller from Columbus, Ohio, shared a few Celtic tales with the audience.

Before and after the stage was taken for all these performances, tables around the room displayed information about diversity in the Ohio Valley. The YMCA Racial Justice Program, Ohio Valley Black

Heritage Festival, Ohio Valley Museum Consortium, and Historic Fort Steuben promoted cultural diversity through entertainment, education, and artistic expression.

Classic jewelry, art, children's books, and photography, including photos of Haiti before and after the earthquake, were among dozens of artifacts displayed this year. Past events have highlighted artists from authentic Appalachian, Korean, Native American, Italian, and African American cultures. Each year, Belmont Technical College's Cultural Pearls Committee strives to welcome diverse groups made up of people from all different backgrounds that call and make the Ohio Valley their home.