

Celebrating culture

Students at Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School participate in African Culture Day

By KENDRA PORT

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COVENTRY — Students on Team Everglades at Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School learned about African culture this week as part of the school's African Culture Day celebration.

The aromas from the many recipes and dishes made and brought in by students traveled throughout the building Wednesday morning, inviting everyone to stop into room Multi-B for a taste of Africa.

The student-led event included presentations on traditional African music, dancing, clothing, architecture, food, drinks, demographics and lifestyle.

Ten long cafeteria tables were set up across the room. On each of them students displayed handmade flags of the African countries they chose to study, as well as a variety of tribal masks. They also set up their Chromebooks to play slide shows they created with information about the countries they chose. On the wall students hung a large tarp with a hand-drawn map of Africa.

They were tasked with



Photos by Kendra Port

Nathon Archambault, Samantha Grimaldi and Haley Hug.

visiting each country, or station, and jotting down interesting facts they learned. They also gathered stickers for each country, which they placed on Bingo cards for a game later in the morning.

Although all of the eighth graders on the team participated in the event, it was

led by several students: Paris Charbonneau, Hailey Gabel, Lauren Richards and Adam Leander.

Charbonneau, Savannah Aragao and Grace Avila brought in homemade Sudanese cookies for their classmates to sample. Charbonneau also helped organize

and oversee the event. Richards' project was focused on Algeria, while Gabel chose Somalia. Gianna DeLellis made a three-tier "Africa Cake."

"Last time we did a cultural day like this for Egypt,"

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Alan Shawn Feinstein Middle School eighth grade students Lauren Chopy, Destiny Ortega and Gianna DeLellis smile for a photo next to their project about Nigeria.



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Moroccan Harcha, or bread, made by Rania Chartier and her family, as well as Moroccan Tea.

Africa

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said Charbonneau. "We also did one for energy usage."

A guest speaker from Senegal visited ASFMS earlier this year to give presentations on Africa.

"The whole thing was planned and done by the kids," said ASFMS Social Studies Teacher Anne Marie Printer. "The teachers also helped with the cooking and setting up. Any child that wanted to step up and help was given the opportunity."

The goal, she said, is twofold: teach students about African culture and foster a sense of empathy.

Gabel and Richards' presentation included a short video clip showing a day in the life of a Maasai girl and her family. They heated their home and cooked dinner over an indoor flame, the smoke from which caused them to cough during the night while they slept.

"We're trying to show the kids a sense of appreciation through these advisory projects," said Printer. "They got to work with kids in other

classes that weren't sitting right next to them, and they really rose to the occasion as far as learning about another continent they weren't familiar with and gaining a sense of empathy."

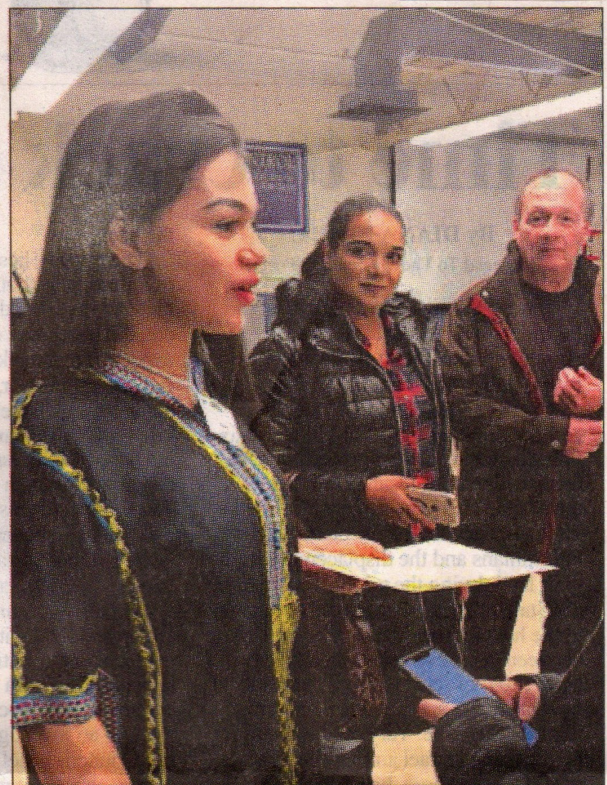
Rania Chartier, whose mother is Moroccan, brought in some cultural dishes, like Moroccan Mint Tea. The recipe is a combination of gunpowder tea pellets, fresh sprigs of mint, water and sugar.

"My mom makes it all the time," she explained. "We also made Harcha, a type of Moroccan bread made with semolina. You have to really work it well and know how to do it. You can't just go ahead and make it. It's hard."

Chartier said she learned that even though Africa has many countries, each one has a different and unique culture.

"I didn't really know a lot about Africa," said Adam Leander. "I don't think any of us knew a lot, so this was really helpful."

Some of the teachers who helped coordinate the event include Maureen Martineau, Roger Desaulniers, Jennifer Pietros, Deonna Pieranunzi, Jean Johnson, Kristie Bru-



Submitted Photo

Rania Chartier (left) speaks about the Moroccan Harcha and tea she made for African Culture Day as her parents look on.

ins, Elizabeth Delfino, Karen New and Carol Jeranian.

Students and parents were also given door prizes before

leaving, including African coffee, tea and body lotion.

Follow Kendra Port on Twitter @kendarport