

2019 Just World Festival brings community together

The annual Just World Festival hosted by the Just World Interact Club took place after school on March 8. The festival showcased multiple cultures and advocated for various issues through food, games, presentations and more.

Multiple local organizations had booths at the festival where they showcased various goods and items. A number of school clubs including the French Honor Society, Green Atoms Environmental Club and Arabic Club also had booths at the festival.

Attendees were able to plant seeds with the Green Atoms and receive henna tattoos from Arabic Club members.

“It was an amazing opportunity to see all of the groups that were helping make a difference in our community,” junior Brooke Fekru said.

Additionally, there were multiple guest speakers featured at the event including two candidates for school board and Virginia State Senator, Dave Marsden.

“My favorite part of the festival was actually seeing all of our hard work and planning come together,” senior Co-President of Just World Emma Kliever said. “I felt proud of what we had accomplished together in only a short period of time.”

Just World Festival 2013 advocates youth activism

As you walk to class, you hear conversations in the hallway, being spoken in Spanish, Arabic, Vietnamese and Urdu. The culture of AHS is unique, with students from over 80 different countries and with families from all walks of life. Reflecting this diversity, the Just World club hosts its annual just world festival which displays various cultural practices and traditions.

The Just World Club has spent the past two months preparing for its annual Just World Festival. The event will take place on Feb. 22, from 2:30 – 6 p.m. in the cafeteria and surrounding classrooms. Admission is free, but attendees are advised to bring spending money for food and donations.

Traditionally, the festival showcases the diversity of AHS through interactive activities such as dance workshops, inspirational speakers and international food. This year, the event will feature all these essential components, but it will also embody the theme of youth activism.

“Youth activism requires open mindedness and what better way to do that then explore the wonderful cultures right here at Annandale?” senior President of Just World Sameen Yusuf said. “We’re trying to take advantage of the International Baccalaureate community, diversity and activism right here in Northern Virginia.”

“So far, the groups that have committed to coming to the festival are LearnServe International, Young Changemakers, Black Coffee Society (from James Hubert Blake HS), STAND, Alternative House and The Catharsis, to name a few,” Yusuf said. “The cultural activities such as dancing, henna, IndAroma, Food Corner Kabob and others tie into our theme

because part of being a global citizen as a teenager is knowing about and being comfortable with the cultures around you.”

Club members have been contacting youth activists and pertinent organizations that would like to present their work at the festival. By contacting people via email, phone calls and social media sites, the festival planners have attracted a wide range of organizations suitable to the wide range of personalities at AHS.

Aaron Jenkins, the program director of Operation Understanding DC; a youth leadership organization, will also be speaking at this year's Just World Festival. Since the Just World Festival is advocating youth activism, Jenkins will be providing thoughtful insights on how to get young leaders more active.

“I have high hopes for the festival this year because of how far we have reached out to organizations with the theme of youth activism,” senior co-vice president Andre Vaca said.

“It is going to be a great opportunity for those attending the festival to understand that they are part of a global community and should be active citizens. Even individuals without the capability of investing their time in supporting causes will have the chance to do something through different methods,” Vaca said.

In addition to attracting local and global organizations for the event, members of the Just World Club have been busy publicizing the festival. They have been making creative posters to hang in the hallways and decorating the display case outside of the cafeteria. Although the event is free and open to the public, paper invitations will soon be circulating amidst the student body via club members.

“Students should definitely go to the festival because they’ll be able to find organizations that they can be a part of with people their own age,” senior co-vice president Zeinab Safi

said. "I really hope that the attendees of the festival learn more about different organizations and strive to make a difference in not only our community but our world."

With the cancellation of Heritage Night, the Just World festival will take on full responsibility as the event in charge of showcasing the diversity of AHS. As club officers and members continue to work on planning the event, their excitement for the big day is tangible.

"We hope that the event will inspire attendees to make small yet important changes in their lives, said Yusuf. "They'll be able to make a difference in their local and global communities. Awareness leads to action and awareness plus action equals impact."

For more information, visit www.ahsjustworld.org

Students and teachers reflect on Just World

Hundreds of different people from all over the Northern Virginia community gathered in the AHS cafeteria on Feb. 24 for the seventh annual Just World Festival, which began at 2:30 p.m. There were exhibits to view, workshops to participate in and lots of international food to be eaten. At about 4:00 p.m., a keynote address was made by Andy Shallal, an Iraqi-American artist, activist and owner of popular restaurant chain "Busboys and Poets."

The exhibitors were mainly composed of students and other locals who wanted to raise awareness for their cause or to showcase their own cultures or talents. Whether the theme was

environmental, medical, social or cultural, each exhibit attracted more than a few guests.

“All these exhibitions were pretty diverse and interesting,” senior Nabil Aklil said. Aklil created the Just World video shown on the morning announcements on Feb. 24.

Various clubs from AHS, such as the Gay Straight Alliance, the Feminist Club, Green Atoms, Science National Honor Society and the Muslim Student Association set up booths featuring brochures, flyers and even snacks. Other groups and individual students set up booths unaffiliated with any official club just to spread their message.

“My favorite was the Speak Truth to Power exhibit,” Aklil said. “It was mainly about those who speak out for human rights.”

The workshops were of similar nature to the exhibits, but were limited in number to three sessions of four or five workshops each. They were also much more in-depth, lasting about 45 minutes per session.

While some workshops featured multicultural dance lessons like Zumba, most of them focused on the big problems of the world.

“Getting kids to go to the academic content oriented workshops was a little more challenging,” Just World sponsor Catherine Munteer said. “But the Occupy DC movement workshop [which began at 4:30 p.m. and extended until well after 6:30 p.m.] was still sitting in the hallway.”

Many students agree that although the non-academic workshops may appear more entertaining, they still enjoyed the academic classes.

“I learned a lot more about the Arab Spring [at the workshop]” Aklil said. There were numerous workshops based on the Middle-East such as “The Arab Revolutions: One Year Later,” “Raqs

Sharqi: Middle Eastern Dance” and “A Journalist Speaks on the Role of the Media.” The last one was presented by Egyptian-American foreign correspondent Nancy Youssef, who also offered aspiring student journalists opportunities for internships.

Other workshops included presentations on the environment, human rights and the economy. A few of these workshops were even presented by members of the AHS student body. Seniors Kunny Kou and Annette Janwatin held a workshop called “Modern Day Slavery” based off of a presentation for their Theory of Knowledge class.

“[John] Hawes was a great help,” Munteer said. “He pushed his IB Diploma Candidates to participate.”

Other student presenters included senior Leo Leksang, and members from the STAND Club and the Hispanic Leadership Club. “We have a great diverse student body so it was great to have everyone get involved,” Munteer said.

Just World President Daniel Park hired food vendors from IndAroma, Breeze Cafe and Food Corner Kabob House to sell international food at the festival. This only added to the already diverse atmosphere of the event.

While the event was generally successful, it led to new ideas already being introduced for next year’s festival. “One thing I’d like to do next year is maybe have a thematic focus,” Munteer said. “Part of what we want this to be about is getting kids to think about their role in the world and to take a more active role in making this world a more just and peaceful place.”

The only drawback of the idea of a thematic Just World would be that it may limit the variety of presenters at the festival. Other than that, “It was mind-blowing,” Aklil said. “It promotes that everyone should all come together and help change the world in their own way.”