

As we celebrate Austin's 150th anniversary, many residents have taken the opportunity to reflect on the distinguishing characteristics that make Austin an attractive place to live, work and visit. For some, the decision to remain a part of this community is often influenced by experiences rooted in the past -- family histories and traditions or personal relationships, developed either through our work or social interaction, that deepen our connection to the city of Austin and its people, but it is a vision of the future that often compels many of us to be more than just members of the community, but to also be active participants in its development. Community is what results when people embrace a common identity and share responsibility for how we live together as a people.

To celebrate, the Cultural Heritage Festival will be held on Sunday, August 20, 2006 from noon to 8:00 PM at the Izaak Walton Cabin and surrounding area. As its name implies, the Cultural Heritage Festival focuses on the cultural legacy that we want to preserve for future generations to enjoy. In essence, the festival is a celebration of the achievements made in maintaining a healthy, vibrant community for the past one and a half centuries and to applaud those who have committed themselves to this endeavor. The goal is to encourage more members of the community to take an active role in the process of building a better community. Building community is always a work in progress, but *who is doing this work, what is actually being done and why it is important* may not always be apparent to some.

We so often defer the responsibility of building and maintaining a sense of community to our civic and political leaders, but every citizen should realize that each of us can be an agent of change in the areas where we have influence. Change comes about much easier more people are involved and work is being done at various levels. In addition to providing fun and entertainment for those in attendance, the activities at the festival also focus on what is common among vibrant communities: Inspiration, Harmony, Unity and Growth.

Inspiration – Successful communities have become so because they have identified and strengthened the characteristics that distinguish them from other communities. We want people to share what they like about Austin and we encourage people to think of ways to make our community even better. A vision of the future is more likely to become manifest if we value creativity and share ideas.

Harmony – We are constantly reminded of the ways in which differ from our neighbors and issues sometimes divide our communities, but by valuing diversity and expressing pride in our uniqueness, we help create a community characterized by harmony and understanding.

Unity – The Latin phrase “E Pluribus Unum”, which appears in the Great Seal of the United States, means “Out of Many, One” reminds us of the importance of meeting the challenge of seeking a consensus about our common identity as a community. When people feel pride for their community, they are more likely to participate in community activities, but in order for people to feel that sense of pride, they must first have the sense of belonging.

Growth – The activities at the festival are designed to give people a better understanding of culture and provide an experience that promotes individual learning and personal growth that can be used to create positive change in the community.

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