

## Ukrainian culture: feast for the senses

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Under the shade of dozens of soaring, lean trees, the aroma of melt-in-your-mouth pierogies, sweet sausage, and juicy sauerkraut saturated the air as traditional Ukrainian folk music bounced off the bark and branches.

Snapping twigs under their feet as they walked through the club's grounds, hundreds of curious families came with mouths watering and left with more than a taste of Ukrainian culture.

Roughly 2,000 people were estimated in attendance Sunday at the 17th Ukrainian Folk Festival held in Tryzub, the Ukrainian American Sports Center in Horsham. The

fair celebrated the 17th anniversary of Ukraine's declaring independence from the Soviet Union.

"This is our opportunity to showcase our beautiful, colorful and vibrant culture," said Gene Luciw, executive vice president of the center, and an organizer and emcee.

While there were no fireworks, Luciw pointed out that the Ukrainian Independence Day is commemorated with the same joy and love as America's Fourth of July.

And the performers' crimson and cerulean costumes and acrobatic routines were just as bright and vivid as a pyrotechnics show illuminating the night sky. The event also featured hand-crafted jewelry, embroidery and pottery.

While they celebrated, many of the Ukrainians prayed for their family and friends in their native country, who are worried about the recent turmoil between Russia and Georgia.

"They're nervous to be next to it. It's a little scary," said Taras Lewyckyj, a Warminster resident and artistic director of the Jenkintown-based dancing ensemble Voloshky. "But that's why today is a nice way for our community to get together and see what Ukraine is all about."

Since the country gained its independence, the peoples' issues have been how to develop their government and protect their freedom, according to Luciw.

"Freedom is very fragile," he said. "Even America learned from 9/11 that an evil force can invade anytime. It's a grave concern for our brothers and sisters."

That's one of the reasons people like Katherine Turner attended the festival — to show moral support.

"It's about trying to connect and identify with others," said the Korean English as a Second Language Teacher from New Jersey. "It broadens your horizon and makes you reminisce about your own culture. I can hopefully use this in my class to help mend and soften any judgmental lines."

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