



Dylan Hernandez is well-turned-out for Davenport's Cinco de Mayo celebration Saturday.

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Holiday

Cinco de Mayo

Davenport celebrates community and culture

By ALIA WILSON

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DAVENPORT — Traditional dance, cuisine and colorful dress brought history alive Saturday during the Davenport Resource Service Center's annual Cinco de Mayo festival.

Performances by salsa group Grupo Magico, dance instruction by Salsa Rueda Santa Cruz, Ballet Folklórico Davenport and Aztec Dancers Ayatochtlii had hips swaying and feet moving as the line for authentic Mexican food continued to stretch for local family specialties until 6 p.m.



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Destinee Rocha combines some traditional Mexican wear with the fun of a bounce house Saturday at Davenport's Cinco de Mayo party.

Through the years the festival tradition has survived through the unity of the citizens, said

Bruce Hobson, the DRSC bilingual program assistant.

"The fact is many people around here have known poverty and know what it is to live under economic difficulties whether in Mexico or here in the United States. And yet people remain," Hobson said. "This kind of celebration is very important as it provides a sense of community. Regardless of how tough things are, people don't lose their traditions."

Co-founder of the Davenport Resource Services Center Maria

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Perez-Olivas has watched the celebration evolve over the past 20 years and said although there is a greater need for the services provided by the center in the poor economy, families never fail to come out and enjoy the community they live in.

"We have seen more and more people coming in to get help with unemployment forms and for farmworker outreach this year," Perez-Olivas said. "But with all the proceeds of this event going back to the center people con-

tinue to show their support by coming out."

For Davenport native Mayra Vasquez, the Cinco de Mayo festival has been a tradition since she was a young girl.

"I used to dance for them and now that I have kids, I wanted to bring them back to share with them," Vasquez said.

Now a mother of an 8-year-old daughter, and 5- and 3-year-old boys, Vasquez said she feels a sense of pride in continuing to be involved in the community where she grew up.

"This year, I was an instructor for Ballet Folklórico Davenport with my sister," Vasquez said. "I got to watch my daughter perform with 20 other kids. This

celebration just brings everyone back together, like a reunion."

A DRSC volunteer for 15 years, Violeta Law said she remembered working with Vasquez when she was a teenager in the center's deli.

"It's been great volunteering and this event allows us to see old friends and kids that we've watched grow up over the years," Law said. "Now friends like Mayra have their own kids that they bring. It's great to be a part of one of the biggest events in Davenport."

Despite gray skies threatening rain, several hundred people showed up throughout the day for the small town tradition.