

EMCC celebrates month of cultural diversity activities

Week becomes month of a look at cultures

by **Claudia Koerner** - Oct. 29, 2008 08:32 AM
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Estrella Mountain Community College is extending National International Education Week into a month of campus events focusing on cultural diversity.

Activities begin Wednesday with a benefit concert for the people of Myanmar and China.

Other highlights include documentary showings and faculty presentations, culminating with guest speaker Oni Vitandham, who survived the Cambodian genocide. She published her autobiography in 2005.

By extending the week, more students have a chance to participate, said Sylvia Orr, dean of academic affairs.

"We're a small campus," she said. "We have a very active faculty and very interested students."

Extending classroom opportunities is a goal for Olga Tsoudis, a sociology professor at EMCC. She will give a presentation based on

vacations to China, Nepal and Bhutan over the summer.

"That's my responsibility as an educator, to share my travels with my students and my colleagues," Tsoudis said.

One of her most memorable experiences was visiting a women's center in Nepal that works with girls rescued from prostitution, she said. Tsoudis delivered money that had been donated at the Avondale college.

Part of international education is being socially aware and having compassion for others, she said.

"I always tell my students to think of their community as a global community," Tsoudis said.

Even in the college's small community, there are 29 international students representing 14 countries, and that's without advertising internationally.

"A lot of it is word of mouth and reputation," Orr said.

One of the events planned for November is a luncheon celebrating those students and their experiences in Arizona.

Understanding and appreciating other cultures is part of the college's commitment

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to teaching and learning, Orr said.

"It prepares our students for when they leave Estrella and go out into an international environment."

EMCC is at Thomas and Dysart roads. All events are free and open to the public.

Information: www.estrella

mountain.edu.

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