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The Indian Organization of Lancaster County (IOLC), in conjunction with the President's Commission on Cultural Diversity & Inclusion, will host the Namaste celebration on Saturday, Sept. 10, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Millersville University's Student Memorial Center (SMC), 1 S. George St., Millersville. Admission to the event will be free of charge, but there will be opportunities to purchase food, and some activities will have a nominal fee.

The festival will celebrate the cultures and traditions of India with a hands-on approach. Henna artists will be available to draw intricate designs on attendees with paste made from the powder of crushed henna leaves. After the paste dries and is removed, the designs will stay on the skin for up to three weeks. The color is bright orange at first but gradually darkens over time.

"There is a belief that the darker the color, the more your significant other loves you," said IOLC president Deepa Balepur, adding that the people of India apply henna on special occasions including weddings, festivals, and celebrations like the one on Sept. 10.

The cultural event will also offer various arts and crafts stations that will represent different

regions of the Indian subcontinent. Children and adults will be able to discover a world of creativity and expression while learning about a different culture. Vendors will showcase a colorful array of clothing and jewelry in a bazaar-style shopping experience.

Visitors will be enticed by a display of roadside snacks from throughout the country. The delicacies will be prepared on-site with fresh ingredients and a helping of bold showmanship by the vendors. The Indian cuisine will feature a variety of vegetarian and non-vegetarian meals cooked with exotic spices, herbs, and roots.

Several breakout sessions will be offered during the celebration.

The Bharatanatyam workshop will cover the basics of Indian classical dance, including posture, expression, positions, and simple steps. Balepur noted that the expressive art form is a popular way of sharing a story.

A session on Heartfulness meditation will offer simple, guided relaxation and meditation techniques to reduce stress and calm the mind.

A third session will focus on culture and traditions. Participants will learn how to wear a traditional sari, which is a piece of fabric several meters in length that is elegantly

draped to make a fashion statement, and they may play an Indian drum called a table. There will be other hands-on activities during the session as well.

The fourth session will feature lessons in the Hindi language, which, along with English, is the official language of India. Attendees will learn common greetings and commands, visual communication and gestures, the Hindi alphabet, and writing below the line.

Additionally, the Namaste celebration will feature a cultural program that will showcase Indian dancers and musicians dressed in the colorful clothing of India. The program will be held inside the SMC, and limited seating will be available.

The Namaste celebration is open to the public, but reservations are requested. Readers may register by emailing [admin@iolcpa.org](mailto:admin@iolcpa.org) and including the number of individuals who will attend. To learn more about the hosting organization, readers may visit [www.iolcpa.org](http://www.iolcpa.org).

**Pictured on front:** A performance of dances and the music of India will be one of the many things to see at the Namaste celebration on Sept. 10.



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