

Kitsap Sun

NEWS

Bainbridge Island's inaugural Korean heritage festival to connect culture and well-being



Marissa Conter

- Kitsap's first annual Korean Heritage Night will be part of Bainbridge Island's Asian Arts and Heritage Festival.
- The event will take place at Woodward Middle School the evening of Thursday, May 8
- Korean dance, martial arts, poetry, a Hanbok fashion show, and more will celebrate culture and raise awareness about mental health.

Although the nation's music and television regularly tops international charts and is a popular choice on streaming platforms, an upcoming showcase on Bainbridge Island is dedicated to empowering diversity through a multi-faceted celebration of Korean culture.

Anna Choi is organizing Kitsap's first annual [Korean Heritage Night](#), an interactive performance event that is a part of the island's annual [Asian Arts and Heritage Festival](#). After performing a Qigong demonstration, or

Korean martial arts, in last year's festival, Choi was inspired to create her own event due to limited Korean representation at the time.

The series of Asian cultural celebration events put on by Bainbridge Island Museum of Art and Arts Humanities Bainbridge are taking place



throughout the month of May, in honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month.

"The event is symbolic for providing a space for people to belong, step up in their leadership and shine their own cultural heritage," Choi said.

Choi is the founder of [SolJoy](#), a nonprofit offering leadership training centered around mindfulness and wellness, as well as a frequent cultural event planner, organizing monthly Korean potlucks in the community. She was among eight local artists who won a grant from Arts

Humanities Bainbridge, through which her vision of a performance that celebrates her Korean heritage while also emphasizing the importance of mental health, is becoming a reality.

Several local artists, with mediums ranging from dance to martial arts and poetry, will perform throughout the night. The event also includes a fashion

show featuring "hanboks," which are traditional Korean clothing. BIMA featured artist Bella Kim will help coordinate stage design, as well as curate a display of her pieces, and Choi is planning to give a performance of her own as well.

All ages are welcome to join the evening's activities, and Choi encourages those interested in participating in one of the night's planned surprises to attend the [upcoming potluck on April 27](#).

"It's supposed to educate people who don't know anything about Korean culture to be like, 'Whoa!'," Choi said in reference to the cultural phenomenon of Korean pop culture rising in international popularity. "And the impact that Hallyu, which is Chinese for 'Korean Wave' has had. Not just from winning the Oscars, having Nobel Prize literature winners, and (KPop Idol BTS) going to the White House and the UN to visit, but in many realms, not just entertainment."



The event will also serve as a fundraiser for SolJoy's scholarships for their wellness training geared toward underserved leaders. Although admission tickets are free, donations will be accepted to benefit the cause.

All performances will reiterate this year's theme of "finding peace," as a nod to May also being recognized as Mental Health Awareness Month. The intersection of these topics is indicative of Choi's passion for educating the community about both subjects, as Choi hopes everyone leaves the showcase not only feeling at peace, but inspired to take action with prioritizing mental health in their daily lives.

Choi also hopes her event creates a space in Kitsap's community to gather together under a common purpose of celebrating the importance of

diversity, especially among the current controversy surrounding the concept.

"My business is in DEI work, and now, people are scared to use the word or any form of it," Choi said. "And I'm like, 'no, we're not going to be scared, we're going to keep using it.' We're going to be bold about it, we're not going to hide. During these unprecedented times, to continue to keep boldly celebrating Korean heritage, even in the face of fear and suppression of DEI or other federally cut programs."

"Finding Peace: 1st Annual Korean Heritage Night" will take place at Woodward Middle School on Thursday, May 8, from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Those interested in attending can register [online](#), as well as learn about volunteer opportunities with the festival.

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