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Japanese tea ceremony teacher from Sand Springs to headline upcoming Asian-American Festival

By Kyle Hinchey Tulsa World Jun 21, 2018 Updated 2 hrs ago





Asian-American Festival

Where: Martin Regional Library, 2601 S. Garnett Road

When: 10:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. June 23

What: The festival will include dances, presentations, arts and crafts activities, martial arts performances and food.

Admission: Free

For more, including a schedule of events, visit tulsalibrary.org/asianfestival or call 918-549-7323.

SAND SPRINGS — The steady splash of flowing water pierced the long silence as Yumie Farringer poured a kettle while teaching a Japanese tea ceremony class at her home in Sand Springs.

Farringer teaches the class about once a month. She believes she's the only Japanese tea ceremony instructor in the Tulsa area and likely Oklahoma.

Nobody talks while she follows the elaborate steps of the ceremony and prepares the green tea. The idea is to appreciate the beauty of things that are simple and natural.



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Like silence.

"There's nothing special about today. It's just Friday," said Fumie Horne, one of her students. "But we have this special place and this special time. Just think about when the last time was that you really listened to the sound of water."

Farringer will perform the ceremony publicly during the Tulsa City-County Library's 16th annual Asian-American Festival on June 23. The event will be from 10:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m. at Martin Regional Library, 2601 S. Garnett Road.

Organizers of the free-to-attend festival, which is funded by the Tulsa Library Trust, say Farringer has completed the demonstration there every year and draws a significant crowd each time. This year the ceremony is being moved to a larger performance area to accommodate her growing audience.

She began learning the ritualistic tea ceremony as a high-schooler in Japan but stopped when she moved to Oklahoma in her mid-20s to be with her husband, whom she met at a military base.

Two decades passed before she started practicing again.

"I wanted to introduce Japanese culture to the people living here," Farringer said. "The tea ceremony is very traditional, and its history goes back almost 400 years."

At first she was nervous because she had never performed in front of crowds before and didn't know whether people would be receptive to the unusual ceremony.

But as it turned out, people were very interested — enough for Farringer to start a class and bring in several faithful pupils who have been learning from her for years.



“Tea ceremonies are a lifetime of learning,” she said. “It’s not something you can just master. It’s a never-ending process. Every time brings different feelings, and that’s why I keep doing it.”

Now Farringer and her students, like Horne, put on demonstrations at schools, libraries and cultural events like the Asian-American Festival.

This year’s event also will feature martial arts demonstrations, traditional dance and drumming presentations, authentic arts and crafts booths, and artwork created by children from Kyoto, Japan. There also will be a food concession with traditional Asian cuisine provided by Spring Noodles.

Farringer’s tea ceremony is the final presentation of the day, 1:25-2:15 p.m.

Horne, who has been learning from Farringer for about eight years, encourages those curious about the Japanese culture to attend the festival, explaining that it’s difficult to understand the concept of the ceremony until you see it.

She said Farringer helped her realize the philosophy surrounding the ceremony — concepts she didn’t recognize during her brief experience with the ritual while growing up in Japan.

“At the time I couldn’t understand anything,” Horne said. “I mean, I could learn how to make tea, but I think I was too young to know the meaning behind the ceremony. It’s more like a spiritual journey.”

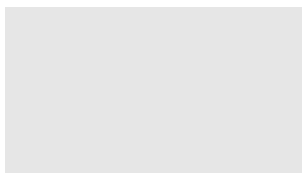
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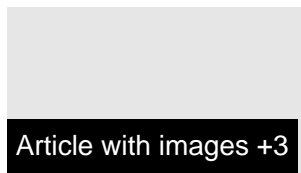
Staff Writer Kyle Hinchey

Kyle joined the Tulsa World in May 2015 and covers law enforcement, breaking news and other general assignment stories. He previously worked at The Oklahoman and graduated from Oklahoma State University with a journalism degree. Phone: 918-581-8451

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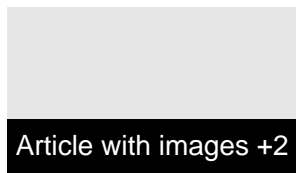


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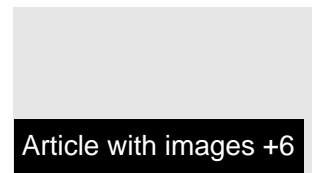
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