UTSA's East Asia Institute (EAI) hosted the third Kimchi Festival on Saturday, April 11th, 2015 in the Main Building on UTSA's main campus. The event was made possible through a very generous grant from Houston Korean Education Center as well as collaboration with the Korean American Association of San Antonio (KAASA), Korean American Cultural Center of San Antonio (KACCSA), S.A. Joong Ang Dance Group, UTSA Korean Cultural Club and the Consulate General of the Republic of Korea in Houston. Over 300 people attended the event that celebrated Korea and its culture.

The festivities began at 2:00 p.m. and guests were invited to visit cultural and educational booths through games, art and craft activities, and short presentations. Many were attracted to the craft booths where they made Korean and American flag ornaments and participated in Korean paper folding.

The traditional Korean game, Yut (four-stick game) was also extremely popular. The trivia game on Korean geography, history, society, economy, language and culture attracted many participants as well. Those that answered the questions correctly were able to spin a wheel and get a prize. KACCSA hosted booths showcasing the Korean language in addition to helping guests write their names in Korean on a bookmark. There was also an informational booth that introduced the Teach and Learn in Korea (TaLK) and English Program in Korea (EPIK) through which American students are able to teach English in Korea. Guests were able to try on Korean traditional clothing as well as playing other games like the Chopsticks game, Gong-Ki-no-ri Korean Jacks, and Jegi Korean Hacky Sack.

After spending time enjoying the fair, guests were invited to the auditorium to hear the opening remarks. Mimi Yu, Associate Director of the East Asia Institute, gave the welcoming remarks and brief introductions to all the speakers. Dr. Deukhee Gong, Korean professor at UTSA, introduced the Kimchi Festival to everyone and gave many thanks to all the Organizations that helped volunteer at the festival. Next up was John Kim, President of KAASA who took up the mic speaking about different types of Kimchi and the health benefits that Kimchi provided.

Once the opening remarks were concluded, the much anticipated performances began. Many traditional Korean dances were performed by the KACCSA Youth Dance Team and the S.A. Joon Ang Dance Group. The first dance was the Flower Crown Dance, this dance is one of the oldest court dances in Korea. It was performed by court dancers at banquets for royalty and foreign envoys. The youth group dancers were elegantly dressed in full court attire. The dancers dance gracefully to a slow rhythm.

The next dance was the Mo Dum Buk, a member of the Joong Ang Dance Team used three huge drums to create a performance. The performer moved quickly and swiftly turning her body around while hitting the drums. After the drum performance, another member of the Joong Ang Dance Group performed a solo dance. This dance is supposed to represent the scent of a
"I love the bright colors of the dancers’ costumes.", says Dominic Sliva, 2015 Kimchi Festival participant

Left (from top): Flower Crown Dance, Mo Dum Buk Dance, Sam Go Mu Dance, Nanta

Top: Fan Dance performed by the KACCSA Youth Dance Group

A woman and expressing the feeling of a woman like joy, anger, love, and happiness.

The KACCSA youth group went on stage again to perform the Fan Dance. This style is one of the most popular and appealing Korean folk dances. This dance is usually performed by a group of young girls with folding fans with feathers at the end. The dancers open and close the fans to a folding rhythm, leading to them resemble a big fluttering flower. The dancers wear colorful costumes similar to those once worn by dancers of the royal court.

The Elegant Dance followed up with two members of the Joong Ang Dance Group doing the performance. It is a creative dance to try to express their hopes and dreams on a beautiful sunny day. The two ladies danced gracefully with traditional Korean attire and with their fans.

The Sam Go Mu is a dance genre with colorful and various techniques, having dancers with three drums hung on the square frames laid out in a triangle form. Three drums equal one set for a dancer so that she can hit all of three drums while dancing. When a performance starts with the powerful sound of Daego, the biggest drum among three, all dancers start hitting the drums hung on the frame. Usually, the beat of dancing gets faster as the performance continues. This emphasizes the strong points of drum.

Another key feature of this dance is that dancers do not just hit the drum but they bend their back or move their body in different ways to hit drums. It shows dancer’s great flexibility as well as their sense of rhythm.

All four members of the Joong Ang Dance Group went on stage to perform the Traditional Korean Sword Dance, which as usually performed at the royal courts and is supposed to represent fighting during war. The dancers were not holding sword—they were holding silver objects that represent swords. Through the performance the tempo got faster and the ladies performed flashy techniques with their “swords”. After the sword
dance, the Nanta Dance was performed. The Nanta has many similarities as the Sam Go Mu Dance but the performers use short drums to perform.

Following the traditional dances, The 2015 Korean Speech Contest winners Jennifer Stevens, Serenity Morales, and Asssel Krymkulova presented their speeches in Korean while there were PowerPoint slides behind them showing the subtitles so that those who did not understand Korean would know what their speeches were about. They talked about why they wanted to learn Korean and how they were first introduced into the culture.

The Final performance of the day took a more modern turn. KACCSA’s K-pop Dance Team and the UTSA Korean Culture Club Dance Team put on exciting K-Pop dance performances. Both groups danced to modern Korean popular music. Both groups put on an accelerating show where the audience could feel the energy coming from the groups. Many of the audience members recognized some songs while others were excited to hear what K-pop music sounded like.

When all of the performances were concluded, Kimchi tasting event began. In addition to the continuation of the festival and booth activities, the attendees were able to enjoy various Kimchi and Korean food tasting catered by Koreana Restaurant, Kiku Garden, and Ilsong Korean Restaurant. Some of the dishes provided included Kimchi (spicy cabbage kimchi), Jap Chae (stir fried noodles with vegetables), Bap (steamed white rice), Baek Kimchi (white kimchi), Oi Kimchi (cucumber kimchi), Musaengchae Kimchi (shredded radish kimchi), Muk muchim (seasoned acorn jelly), and Kkakdugi (spicy sliced radish kimchi).

As the event grew to a close, all of the guest seemed very pleased with their experiences. “I liked the festival!” exclaimed one young participant, “I hope next year will be bigger!”. “All the information booths were very educational and I learned a lot about Korean culture. I didn’t know the Korean Culture was so unique”, said another participant. The EAI is looking forward to hosting next year’s Kimchi Festival so stay tuned!