



The Post-Standard

Local students to catch the Korean Wave

Also called Hallyu, it's a world phenomenon centered on Korean culture.

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Jongwoo Han wants to share a global phenomenon with Central New Yorkers.

It's called the Korean Wave or Hallyu, a unique pop culture experience centered on Korean films, soap operas and music.

"It's not just about the entertainment industry of Korea, it's about Korean confidence about themselves and their experience," said Han, principal of the Central New York Korean School.

Saturday, the school will begin a six-week course focusing on why the Korean Wave is popular, and on Korean language and family values.

Participants will also watch video clips from popular Korean television dramas such as "Winter Sonata" and "Autumn Breeze" and listen to music by Korean entertainer Rain.

Han hopes to attract Korean parents and Americans who have adopted Korean children, as well as people from the community who are interested in learning about Korea.

The Central New York Korean School teaches Korean language and culture. It serves 30 children and 10 adults, many of whom are American parents who adopted Korean children.

Koreans are the sixth largest Asian group in the United States and the fourth largest in Onondaga County, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2005 American Community Survey.

About 1,660 Koreans live in Cayuga, Cortland, Madison, Onondaga and Oswego counties, according to the 2000 Census.

When the Korean War ended in 1953, there was nothing left but ashes, said Han, who came to the United States in 1985 to study political science at Syracuse University. He is now a professor at SU.

Since the end of the war, South Korea, formally known as the Republic of Korea, has played catch-up to industrialized nations and undergone rapid economic change to become the 11th largest economy in the world, Han said.

Korean brands such as Hyundai vehicles and Samsung electronics are popular, he said. And the Korean entertainment business is booming across Asia, Han said.

Korean dramas are broadcast to more than 27 million households in the United States, according to YA Entertainment LLC, a distributor of popular Korean TV drama programming on DVD with English subtitles in North America.

The Post-Standard interviewed Han:

What is the Korean Wave?

The Korean Wave is popular Korean culture, especially in Asia, including Korean song, movies, drama and Korean entertainers. It started in the mid-1990s when CCTV in China began to feature some of the famous Korean dramas and Korean singers.

Why is the Korean Wave so popular? Korean culture is popular in Asia because Asians share a cultural background. There is a strong legacy to Confucianism which talks about different sets of relationships and values.

Why did you decide to offer a course on the Korean Wave? I want to offer this adult class to focus on getting parents, both Korean and American parents, more familiar with Korean contemporary popular culture, which seems to be a global phenomenon now.

What is the impact of the Korean Wave on Korean-American communities?

The South Korean government is very supportive of it. The country has a unique experience in economic development and democratization and is now surfacing as a cultural phenomenon. In the 1960s and 1970s, South Korea accomplished an economic miracle along the Han River and in the 1980s achieved democratization. It gives Koreans self-confidence about their culture and begins to express this cultural content to others.

What is its impact so far in American cities?

One good example will be the singer Bi (also known as Rain). He came to New York City in February 2006, and his concert was covered by The New York Times. In February, Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government hosted a seminar about the Korean Wave.

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