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A Day for Korean culture

School sets aside regular classes for celebration

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By BoNhia Lee

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The Central New York Korean School celebrated Korean culture Saturday, a day best known for another celebration: St. Patrick's Day.

The school in Syracuse celebrates Korean culture once every semester, said Principal Jongwoo Han.

"This is the day to celebrate identity, Korean culture and to reach out to the community," Han said.

The school canceled its regular Saturday morning Korean language classes and replaced them with lessons about food, arts and crafts, holidays, history and a Korean lunch. About 30 students dressed in matching white T-shirts with the school name.

"I like it because it's really fun and you do lots of activities," said Joonhwa Kim, 9, of Fayetteville.

Joonhwa and three of her friends attended a music class where they learned a song about Yu Kwan Soon, sometimes called Korea's Joan of Arc.

Soon was tortured and killed by the Japanese for participating in a nationwide march for Korea's independence in 1919.

In another classroom, Jaewon Choi taught children adopted from Korea how to make Korean kites and paper fans.

Flying kites is a tradition during the Korean Lunar New Year, Choi said.

"When you fly it, you cut off the string and let it fly away and it will take your bad luck with it," Choi said.

Ben Masten, 8, of Jamesville, decorated his rectangular kite with drawings of trees, buildings, and blue- and green-colored skies. "It's from my imagination," Ben said.

When Ben's class finished the kites, they moved into another room to make dumplings that were

served during lunch.

The dumplings are everyone's favorite, said Stacey Pope, of Syracuse, who has three children adopted from Korea.

"It's a great way for them to connect with their heritage," said Pope, whose oldest son, Sammy, 7, attends the school.

Katie Masten, 17, has attended the school for about seven or eight years. "I like the chance to be in a Korean environment at least once a week," Katie said.

Katie, her sister, who also was adopted from Korea, and their mother visited South Korea in 2005. The visit gave Katie newfound respect and love for her culture.

"After I got back from Korea, I think I learned more (Korean)," Katie said. "Being Korean and being immersed in the culture for two weeks made it easier to learn."

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