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## Post-Standard, The (Syracuse, NY)

September 18, 2005

**Section:** Local

**Edition:** Final

**Page:** B8

### CULTURAL CONNECTION TO KOREA STRENGTHENED CNY **SCHOOL** HELPS FAMILIES LEARN ABOUT HERITAGE

*Diana LaMattina Staff writer*

As parents practiced cooking bulgogi, a **Korean** beef stir-fry recipe, in the basement of the Central New York **Korean School** in Syracuse on Saturday, their adopted **Korean** children learned about **Korean** culture, including folk songs, dances and the language.

As the parents mixed roasted sesame seeds with soy sauce and sugar, they spoke about how important it is for their children to learn about **Korean** culture. "If you give them a chance to learn their culture now, they won't resent not knowing when they're older," said Joe Leogrande, of Auburn. His two children Alexandra, 15, and Joey, 13, were adopted from Korea. Alexandra continues to attend CNY **Korean School**.

Cultural dishes are one way the parents learned to incorporate **Korean** culture into their family lives. In some houses, the meals are served alongside American dishes. In other homes, families make **Korean** dishes for holidays and birthdays.

The CNY **Korean School**, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in December, provides an opportunity for the children to interact with others who share their background. Principal Jongwoo Han said the **school** now serves about 50 students, about double what it began with. While the **school** continues to focus on serving the needs of local **Koreans** immigrants, it also has found a need to serve families of adopted **Korean** children.

"The **school** is growing," Han said. "I see signs of a stronger interest especially from the American community."

Some classes are specially designed for **Korean** children adopted by American families. Also, special activities such as traditional music, the martial art of Hapkido, calligraphy and art classes are held on Saturday mornings.

George "Scooter" Youst of Geddes, and his wife, Stacey Pope, have adopted three **Korean** children: George Samuel Kim Youst, 6, Nathan Lee Chung Youst, 3, and Liana Jee Hei Youst, 1. Youst said he and Pope listen to **Korean** children's songs, try to learn the language, and incorporate their children's **Korean** names as ways of keeping them in touch with their **Korean** heritage. Their oldest son attends the classes and is very interested in the **Korean** culture, he said.

"He wants to know. He's willing to learn and try it all," Youst said. "It's a great opportunity for him." For more information on the Central New York **Korean School** or upcoming cooking classes, call 637-9836 or contact Han at [Jonghan@maxwell.syr.edu](mailto:Jonghan@maxwell.syr.edu) or at 637-9836.

**Illustration:** PHOTO

Lauren Marsh/Contributing photographer

CHUNG-HEE LEE (right) teaches Kathy Woodruff, the parent of a **Korean** child, how to cook **Korean** beef dishes of bool koki and bulgogi. The

cooking lesson was part of a series offered in the basement of the Central New York **Korean School** in Syracuse.

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