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Symposium offers bridge to emerging China

BY HOWARD MCEWEN | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

Learn more about the past, present and future of China at the 2006 Chinese Cultural Symposium today at Northern Kentucky University.

"I think I can say that everyone at Northern (Kentucky University) is interested in China as an emerging world power and more specifically in the Chinese-American community in Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky," Tom Leech, foreign language coordinator in the Department of Literature and Language, said.

"Echoes from the East" aims to bridge the gap between East and West as well as improve the region's international image.

It will include "The China Trade, 1756-2006: Triumphs and Troubles," a presentation by Professor Jonathan Spence. He is Sterling Professor of History at Yale University and author of several books on Chinese history.

The three afternoon sessions address "Living with Balance & Harmony," "Art of Natural Healing" and "Doing Business with China."

A networking and food-sampling event takes place before an evening concert. "Journey of Music 2006" will feature various artists, including Abigail Washburn, who fuses Kentucky's native bluegrass music with the Chinese languages.

The purpose of the event is education, said Dr. Jacque Van Houten, world language and international education consultant for the Kentucky Department of Education.

"They (the Chinese Ministry of Education) are trying to help the U.S. get the Chinese language taught in school. Currently, there's only one school district that offers some Chinese in the state," Van Houten said.

This fall, the university will offer a minor in Chinese Studies.

Leech noted that NKU plans on offering certification for Chinese teachers for local schools. Also, Boone County will begin offering Chinese next year.

"So many people in the world speak it," Van Houten said.

In a 2004 Cabinet for Economic Development report, Kentucky exported to Taiwan and mainland China \$395 million and \$317 million, respectively. That is a 618 percent increase since 1999, she said.

Noting that France is Kentucky's second-largest trading partner, Van Houten emphasized the need to offer instruction in several languages.

"We need people to speak a variety of languages because we don't know what the future holds," she said.

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