

Korean English Summer Institute

By Brianne Hughes

In celebration of yet another successful exchange, the Korean English Summer Institute held a farewell potluck in August. The meal was traditional Korean cuisine and the atmosphere was bittersweet. "They arrive as strangers but leave as family," says Dr. Charles Zartman, director of the program as well as a professor here at CSU, Chico's Center for Bilingual and Multicultural Studies. Present at the potluck were not only the Korean teachers here on exchange, but their host families, new found friends, and members of the community. It was an evening of skits, stories, great food, and "noraebang", the Korean version of karaoke. Overall the evening embraced the differences and similarities of our two cultures. From the friendship shown through the revised lyrics of "Dancing Queen," which thanked Dr. Zartman and other key members of the program, it is impossible to know that all present were absolute strangers three weeks ago. As the evening closed with a traditional Korean fan dance and a sprinkling of rain, it was easy to see why the program is nicknamed "Chico Family."

Twenty-two years ago, the Chungcheongbuk Department of Education approached the director of the Center for Bilingual and Multicultural Studies, Jesus Cortez, about setting up a program to help their English teachers. With this, the Korean English Summer Institute was born, but what began as a classroom oriented program has evolved into so much more. The program aims to improve the teachers' confidence and to improve their strategies on achieving better language skills, all of which can be learned in a classroom setting. Several years of dorm life later, Dr. Zartman's wife, Tencia, organized Chico community members to host the group of teachers and as a result added a new element to the program, learned skills in action.

The teachers spend a portion of their day in classes working with "tutors," some of Chico State's teachers-in-training as well as accredited teachers and professors. The Korean participants improve their English as well as improving their techniques on teaching others the language. The rest of the time, the tutors become "guides" and introduce them to the community. Trips to Lassen, San Francisco, and beyond give them a glimpse of Chico, of California, and of American life.

The Korean English Summer Institute intends to continue many years into the future, hoping to maintain Chico's special relationship with the Chungcheongbuk province. Dr. Zartman has plans for developing a winter counterpart as well, where teachers from past summer exchanges can return with their families to relive the Chico Family experience.