

'Touch of Africa' asks students to feel cultures of diverse continent

By RACHELLE AYUYANG
Collegian Staff Writer

"A-hoo! A-hoo!" chanted a choir in tie-dyed attire designed to reflect African culture.

At the eighth annual "A Touch of Africa," sponsored by the African Students Association, performers stomped their feet and swayed to the songs that joined their voices into one in the HUB Ballroom Saturday night.

"We want to portray our diverse culture to the Penn State community," association President Win Mlambo said.

Mlambo said in his opening remarks that he wanted to clarify misconceptions and speak about current events in Africa, including problems of prolonged wars and hunger in Ethiopia and the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

Mlambo said he also wanted to present a better image of Africa by highlighting progress in African

nations. He alluded to Zimbabwe's goals to rebuild the country and its economy, he said.

Even though this event has occurred in March in past years, Mlambo said ASA moved it to coincide with Black History Month.

A dinner featuring African cuisine preceded the entertainment, which included cultural songs, dance, music and a fashion show.

To introduce the program, children walked in a procession carrying candles symbolizing freedom and peace in Africa, Mlambo said.

Pumping their fists in the air, an ASA choir sang a capella the national anthem of Africa, in which the singers cried "God bless Africa and the African nation."

The anthem flowed into a song called "Shosholoza" that accompanied a poetry reading on the turmoil in the African countries. Humming, whistling and moving to the "Shosholoza" and the rhythm of their voices, the singers conveyed "somewhere in South Africa, people are crying for freedom."

After the choir, the Nommo Performing Arts Company performed two dances.

"Mirror Images," told the story of the relationship between mother and child, said choreographer Stephanie Johns (senior-psychology).

In pairs — one tall and one short dancer representing a mother and child — dancers switched positions with their partners to signify the mother imparting her values and experiences on her child. Clad in black tights and white airy tops, the dancers sought different partners, symbolizing the adoption of these lessons into their lives and their sharing them, Johns said.

Johns said she hoped more people would attend the event to experience the African culture.

"We can share classes with other people — why not activities?" Johns said.

Several in attendance said they thought the event enlightened them about African culture.

Siamak Roshanravan, a participant and a member of the association, said, "I wanted to learn a different culture and get in touch with other students."

Friends answer phones

Volunteers act as buddies to area children

By ADRIENNE PAYNE
Collegian Staff Writer

"Hello, this is Phone Friend."

In a tiny room inside the Wesley Foundation, 256 E. College Ave., volunteers greet children who are home alone and want someone to talk to with this cheery phrase.

From 3 to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, University students and members of the community volunteer to spend time with lonely children over the phone in an organization called Phone Friends.

Although many volunteers are community residents, Phone Friends employs 20 students, many of whom work for Lions Share, said Louise Guernsey, professor of health and human development and director of Phone Friends.

"We have a nice blend of students and

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