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Event Story

NORTH KINGSTOWN – The University of Rhode Island held an event Tuesday afternoon to kick off International Education Week with free food, celebration of international students and good company.

Taste the World is an event that URI has held every year since Nov. 15, 2012, when the event first started and URI introduced 99 flags. The event first began to bring attention to International Education Week and has continued to be one of the school’s most popular events every year and not just because of the free food.

The international section of URI’s Memorial Union is a place where everybody is welcomed with open arms from the international community on campus. Gifty Ako-Adounvo, the assistant vice provost for global strategies and international affairs at Ohio State University, came to Taste the World to talk about the importance of international education on a college campus.

Ako-Adounvo believes that celebrating international education is an essential part of everyone’s education, she said, “Make friends with international students and if you’re an international student, make friends with an American student.” For Ako-Adounvo, International Education Week brings students from URI together to celebrate engagement of the world. Taste of the World also puts a start to celebrating the benefits of international education and exchange worldwide, making students all over URI’s campus aware of the different heritages that a present and bring all students together no matter where they are from.

Taste the World also has every college student’s favorite thing: free food! At this event, students learn about different cultures through the flavors, textures and smells of wonderful food from around the world. At Tuesday’s event, there was food from El Salvador including pupusa (masa cake), refried beans, salsa roja and curtido (cabbage slaw), food from The Democratic Republic of the Congo including, poulet moambe (moambe chicken), akara with dipping sauce (bean fritters) and fried plantains and finally food from India which including pakora and samosas.

A senior at URI, Blessing Gbemisola, attends Taste the World every year. Gbemisola works in URI’s Memorial Union with the building manager and gets the information on the event either from the events calendar or from friends. Gbemisola said she is an immigrant herself and celebrating anything international excites her. “It’s always good to know about different cultures and to learn about people around you,” Gbemisola said. She is proud of the diverse community URI has to offer and believes that learning about that is really important for students who want to be well rounded.

In addition to the free food and the celebration for the start of International Education Week, Carol Stiles, the director of the Memorial Union at URI, introduced two new flags to be hung that represent The Democratic Republic of the Congo and El Salvador.

There are 125 flags from countries around the world that hang in the Memorial Union to represent the international bodies at URI. A graduate student from URI, Berenice Yang Gonzalez, spoke at the event about her appreciation and excitement for the international community at URI. “It’s a privilege to be able to represent my country, especially here at URI and especially for all the minorities out there,” Gonzalez said.

Gonzalez is originally from El Salvador and continues her studies at URI and continues to take part in International Education Week at the university.

Taste the World is an event that encourages students to appreciate all the varying heritages that make up the world and to think about the world and be a good global citizen, said Sheri Davis, the coordinator of conferences and events and marketing at the memorial student union

Not only does Taste the World encourage students to learn more about international students and different cultures, this event also has information for students looking to study abroad, international internships, international service projects and research.