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Kalamazoo Russian Festival

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Kalamazoo Russian Festival
Dr. John M. Dunn
11/19/11

- Good morning. It's my pleasure to welcome you to the Kalamazoo Russian Festival and to the campus of Western Michigan University. This is the 16th year for this wonderful family event and the 8th year it has been held on our campus.
- We have with us today visitors, performers and vendors from across the Midwest, and beyond--perhaps as many as 1,000 people will be joining us over the course of the day. We also have guests from the Russian Embassy and the Russian School in Washington, D.C. We are happy to have you here with us to celebrate this celebration that has its roots in the unique partnership between the city of Kalamazoo and our Russian sister city of Pushkin.
- This event began as an annual party in a private home in Kalamazoo and now attracts visitors from around the nation. Throughout the years, Western Michigan University has been a willing and constant partner in this effort. A number of our faculty and staff members and their families have been instrumental in staging this campus and community tradition. This year, in fact, the festival co-chair is Judith Rypma (RIPmah) of our Department of English. Other faculty members will be speaking performing or showing their artistic talents.
- This festival grew out of the Kalamazoo-Pushkin Partnership. That relationship started in the early 1990s and remains today a humanitarian organization, a cultural interest group, and an ethnic network. Today, the partnership is known as the Kalamazoo Russian Culture Association.

- When the partnership was started, much of the effort was aimed at meeting immediate medical needs in Pushkin. This festival raises funds for the partnership's humanitarian projects in the city still, and over the years, as this event has grown, the proceeds have been used for a women's health clinic, an art school for the deaf, an orphanage and a hospital for children with orthopedic problems and disabilities.
- We're a University that prides itself in being learner centered, discovery driven and globally engaged. This community partnership is truly a global engagement model for our students and a point of pride for this entire region.
- Kalamazoo's medical community was deeply involved in beginning this partnership and remains part of its core base of support. As our University moves more deeply into medical education with the start of a new school of medicine, I hope we'll be able to continue to add value to the effort.

Please enjoy the music and dance performances, try the wonderful Russian cuisine and sample the drama and academic presentations. Take advantage of this opportunity to shop, play a little chess and admire the work of artisans. And plan to come back again in future years.

Thank you for visiting and enjoy your day.