

# Halton celebrates its diversity

By Robb Swybrous  
SPECIAL TO THE BEAVER

With the support of a few area organizations, a group of high school students transformed the auditorium at the Halton Regional Centre in Oakville, Thursday, into a display of diversity and culture.

The group brought together food, dance, fashion and art from places like Germany, India, the Arabic world and Africa to put on the first Halton Multicultural Showcase.

Halton Regional Police Diversity Officer Constable Diane Hendry teamed up with Joanna Matthews, a race relations worker with the Halton Multicultural Council, to provide the necessary administrative support for the event. But, as Hendry says, their job was mostly to stand back and see what the students came up with.

"As much as we wanted to we really tried to let the students plan it and they really have done a great job," Hendry said. "We're thrilled with the response."

Matthews was equally impressed. "That's exactly what they can do with their energy," she said. "They took on the responsibility of planning, the organizing and the doing. We jump the hoops and we do the red tape stuff, the rest they've done."

The night's performances included a group of Oakville Trafalgar High School students acting out an anti-racism skit, and White Oaks Secondary School students Alan Ahmed and Soumaya Qureshi performing an original Arabic dance.

Ramya Babu of Clarkson Secondary School in Mississauga dazzled the audience of more than 300 with a Bharatanatyam dance, adapted from her Indian heritage. And Lester St. Pearson High School student Harjit Chana hammered out a rhythmic thapsoody beating a dhol drum.

For Chana, Thursday's inaugural showcase is only the beginning of what he hopes is an ongoing effort to celebrate the diversity that is now embedded in Halton's communities.



Ross Kozicki / Oakville Beaver

Ramya Babu, a student at Clarkson Secondary School, performs a traditional Bharatanatyam dance Thursday of the first Halton Multicultural Showcase.

**2006** - High school students performed at the Halton Regional Centre in Oakville to display diversity and culture. Halton Regional Police Diversity Office Constable Diane Hendry teamed up with Joanna Matthews, Halton Multicultural Council, to provide leadership and support for the event.

**30<sup>th</sup>**  
Anniversary

Halton  
**Multicultural Council**