

Feel at home in The Hague

The International Community Fair 2008

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'If you build it, they will come'

In the movie 'Field of Dreams', Kevin Costner plays a farmer who becomes convinced that he is meant to build a ball field in the middle of Iowa, on prime farm land, so that a ghostly team of long-deceased baseball greats could play ball at night. He hears a voice saying, 'If you build it, they will come.' And he was right: the ghosts arrive, and the film ends with spectators approaching the ballfield. They - YOU - will come, because you know what is needed to make a new home in a new country!

Two years ago, Billy Allwood of TheHagueOnLine and Hazel O'Dea, then Director of ACCESS, pondered this issue, wondering if they could gather enough exhibitors and visitors to their brainchild, the International Community Fair, now known as 'Feel at home in The Hague'.

No doubt the Carlton Ambassador Hotel, which invested its time, reputation and facilities, may have wondered the same. Hindsight is 20/20 they say, and there were 'no worries'. Last year, on the eve of the second International Community Fair, as the Project Manager of the event, I wondered, 'Will they come?' I knew I had stand-holders: individuals, organisations, commercial operations of all magnitudes, ready to descend upon the Atrium at 7am that Sunday to set up for the Fair. But as I closed my eyes (ha!) the evening before, I wondered, 'But what about the people we're doing this for? Will they come?'

Almost four months before the third 'Feel at home in The Hague' – The International Community Event, I can assure one and all, that people will most definitely come. The stands are essentially sold and already there are more than 174 different groups, organisations, businesses, large and small signed up to participate or contribute to the Fair. Already there are ticket sales being requested via the online ticket sales option. The Fair has already been featured in the Expat Journal, ACCESS Magazine, and The Hague Times.

In all the planning and organising that goes into such an event, one thing comes up again and again: the Fair is not only a fun day out, but the premiere networking event for new arrivals, seasoned internationals and returning residents. People not only come, but return year after year.

Mark Sunday 21 September 2008 in your calendars! From 11:00-17:00 the Atrium of City Hall will be full of people to meet, things to do and learn about and discoveries to be made. For more information and ticket reservations, visit www.FeelathomeinTheHague.com

See you there, Deborah Valentine

