

Feel at home in The Hague

The International Community Fair 2008

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Feeling at home, not an exclusive affair

Following an interview with City Alderman for citizenship and liveability, Mr Rabin Baldewsingh in November of last year, regular contributor to TheHagueOnLine, Diane Lemieux concluded her article by saying "Here's to raising the profile of a new breed of citizen: the expat Hagenaar!" This Sunday, at the 'Feel at home in The Hague – The International Community Fair', this profile is indeed raised.

There are more than 185 groups, clubs, associations, and small as well as large enterprises signed up to introduce themselves, and their services, to the so-called 'expat' community of The Hague. What was encouraging to see, upon a review of who was coming, is how many of these are actually rooted in the 'expat Hagenaar' community. More than 60% of those registered for the Fair, are in fact a testament to this form of citizenship. Individuals and groups who have been around for a while, whose 'origins' shall we say lie elsewhere, but whose contribution and existence encourages an interactivity between those recently arrived, here for a short or long stay and the local population itself. Very few of the groups you will meet on Sunday are exclusive to an 'expat' group – and those that are have corporate reasons for being so – in fact the motivation of many is integration, drawing people together.

Whether it is sharing an interest or passion in a sporting activity, or a global issue, or simply the exchange of opinions and networking, the flow of nationalities, experiences and languages within each of the groups is fluid and vibrant.

If this is not 'a toast' to a particular group of people, then we do not know what is.

Want to be a part of this new brand of citizenship, in a city which prides itself on being international? Then be sure to join us on Sunday 21 September from 11am – 5pm in the Atrium of City Hall. There will many things to do, people to meet and experiences to share. For a review: visit our website www.FeelathomeinTheHague.com, and for discounted tickets (€5/person and €10/family), picking them up at the American Book Centre on the Lange Poten on Saturday is your last chance. Otherwise, even at the full price (€10/person and €15/family) the Fair is an opportunity for one and all, new and longer term resident, international or local.

We are ready. Are you?

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