

Feel at home in The Hague

The International Community Fair 2007

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The Fair – What an Affair!

The City Hall was a busy beehive Sunday 9 September, with thousands of visitors checking out the 170+ stalls for information on activities and pastimes in The Hague. Ranging from yoga to post university degrees, from churches to choirs and small businesses, the stalls were well attended and people's faces were bright.

The Fair was officially opened by Alderman Fritz Huffnagel, who appreciated the efforts and input of the expat community to build their home in The Hague, also adding that the city strives to attract more international companies and organizations. Alderman Huffnagel officially launched the Expat Theatre Guide by handing over its first copy to Ms Barbara Ullman, longstanding director of ACCESS, while emphasising that The Hague was the only Dutch city in the Netherlands to actually have a cultural guide in English.

Toastmasters hosted The Podium that offered a great variety of performances, to inspire and entertain the Fair-goers. The British School choir, AVEDA hairdressers, the Aikikai Aikido Club, St Andrew's Scottish dancing, the Viotta Youth Orchestra and many others gave live demonstrations of what they're passionate about.

The Children's Corner was a hive of colorful activity with delightful dragons and furniture supplied by Ikea and superb childcare by Comme a la Maison. World class Kiwi storyteller Tanya Batt, sponsored by Verwijs booksellers, delighted her audiences young and old with a mixture of song, story and dance. Children held their breath as the self-confessed frockaholic from New Zealand spun tales from around the globe to children from all parts of world attending the Fair! Other workshops were equally well attended, giving parents peace of mind and focused attention on the day.

The masses kept coming and going in tidal waves right up to the end and all the cotton bags handed out by the organisers – cotton, not plastic, by the way – were filled with flyers, samples and more information.

Sleek, elegant, airy, light, minimalist, professional – these are some of the words that kept popping up in the conversations with the stall holders and visitors, when asked about what they appreciated about this year's Fair – despite the numbers the event went on in a quiet and very enjoyable manner.

The Fair's project manager, Deborah Valentine, summed up her experience on the day after: 'I was honored to be associated with so many willing and enthusiastic co-hosts in welcoming new friends to The Hague, and renewing friendships with those here longer.'

We thank all our sponsors - the City of The Hague; ABN AMRO; The British School of the Netherlands, Shell Outpost; Octagon; and BMW as well as our media partners – Xpat Media and Dutch News - who made this Fair possible; we thank our team of volunteers, who freely gave of their time and talents; we thank our visitors for accepting our invitation - and we'll strive to keep building that home in The Hague.

See you next year - yours truly,

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