

A taste of Brazil comes to Creative 360

What: “Brazil, Brazil!” cultural party

Where: Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center) at 1517 Bayliss in Midland.

When: 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., Friday, May 14

Cost: \$70 per person/\$130 per couple, which includes dinner, drinks, entertainment and dancing

For more information: Call (989) 837-1885 or visit www.becreative360.org

Midland -- A visiting chef from the South American nation of Brazil will cook up an authentic cultural feast at Midland’s Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center) on Friday, May 14.

“He’s in Midland with his wife, who was transferred here for her job, so he will make sure it’s a genuine thing we are doing,” says Kristiina Pilnik, one of the volunteer organizers of “Brazil, Brazil!” The 7 p.m. – 11 p.m. celebration features food, drink, desserts, music and dancing. “We don’t want a wanna-be with this.” Tropical décor, Brazilian art, and guests dressed for dancing will add to the festive atmosphere.

As Sarah Gorman, director of creativity at Creative 360, explains it, the non-profit organization recently decided to begin hosting an annual cultural party -- each year picking a different nation to celebrate.

Brazil was chosen first because Midland has a sizable contingent of Brazilians -- one Pilnik estimates at 20 or more families. And she should know. Although she is Finnish by birth, she lived in Brazil for 16 years when her father was transferred there.

“I loved the place, and I went to university there. It is the happiest place I have ever visited and I have been a lot of places. There is always lots of music, singing and dancing, and we want to capture that.”

In addition to the volunteer chef, Pilnik has also enlisted the help of Cristina Borneo, a native of Brazil who has lived in Midland for 10 years. "She has done a lot of party planning and so have I. We have done loads of Latin parties. So we are comfortable with this."

On the menu, Pilnik says, is the national dish of feijoada, white rice, kale sauteed with olive oil, the national cocktail caipirinha, and a dessert buffet featuring a passion fruit mousse and Brazilian chocolates.

The feijoada dish, she says, dates back to the days of colonial slavery in Brazil -- when pig ears, tails and feet that the plantation owners did not eat were passed on to the slaves and mixed with black beans and seasonings. "Over the years, rest assured, it became a more sophisticated dish with prime cuts of pork, beef, and specialized sausage along with black beans."

And the drink is made with cachaça, a Brazilian liquor distilled from sugar cane, mixed with crushed limes, sugar and ice.

Along with the food and drink, the party features authentic live Brazilian music. Escola de Samba Unidos de Midland, an all-Brazilian band of 10 local executives, will play carnival, bossa nova and samba dance music, says Pilnik, during dinner and for dancing afterwards. "When they play samba, we want people to get up and move." The band includes vocalists, guitar, alto sax, congas, drums, and other percussion. Impromptu samba lessons will be part of the evening, as well as a Zumba demonstration featuring students of Patricia Daly moving to an all-Brazilian soundtrack.

The evening will include a slide presentation showcasing Brazil, with its population of 190 million, and its Portuguese heritage. Brazil is in land mass the largest country in South America and the fifth largest in the world (after Russia, Canada, China and the United States).

"We're hoping this party will attract a mixed age group, especially young professionals," says Pilnik. "We promise singing and dancing and good fun."

The cost is \$70 a person or \$130 for a couple, with reservations required by Monday, May 10. Call (989) 837-1885 or log on to www.becreative.org.

About Creative 360

Creative 360, formerly known as Creative Spirit Center, is a not-for-profit community arts and wellness organization founded in 1994. The Center's mission is to create an environment for people of all ages to experience the creative process through ongoing classes, art exhibits, events, concerts, speakers and outreach programs; and its goal is to enhance the development of physical, mental and spiritual wellness through the arts and humanities. Visit

www.becreative360.org for more information about programs, or call (989) 837-1885 to request a mailed copy of the current schedule.

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