

International Festival embraces cultural community as it touts support services

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HYANNIS — Flags from nations around the world fluttered in the breeze while children enjoyed rock painting, a blow-up slide and games on the Hyannis Village Green on Saturday afternoon.

The first International Festival hosted by Independence House was a free celebration designed to embrace the cultural community on Cape Cod.

“Cape Cod has diversity in its communities,” said Katia Dacunha from Cape Cod and Islands Commission on the Status of Women, who helped organize the event. “This allows everyone to come together and celebrate diversity and bring resources to everyone.”

Independence House, based in Hyannis, has been providing resources and counseling to address and prevent domestic and sexual violence to Cape Cod residents for almost 40 years.

The goal of the event was to provide a welcoming environment for everyone on Cape Cod to learn more about the resources available not only through Independence House, but from other support services as well.

Nanci Rindfuss, clinical director at Independence House, said the International Festival invites everyone from all different backgrounds to come together and take part.

“(The Cape) is multicultural,” she said. “It is nice to see everybody together.”

Throughout the afternoon and evening, food trucks, speakers, musical acts, games and multicultural dance lessons entertained guests.

Tables representing nonprofit groups and agencies such as the New England Wellness Foundation also were set up to provide guests with information on services available to them on Cape Cod.

Two representatives from Cape Verde and Brazil were at the event.

“Independence House deals with providing services for sexual domestic assaults and violence,” said Chris Morin, director of prevention, education and outreach for Independence House. “That is a hard subject to talk about. The festival allows it be visible and less intimidating.”

Often people may be hesitant to seek out services because of language barriers or other reasons, Morin said. Having the information booths allows them to learn about options in a fun, positive environment.

In the past, Morin said, Independence House has tried other methods to let people know about their services, without much success. They decided to try something different, which led to this festival, she said.

“It’s a repeat event,” Dacunha said. “It will happen again and will get bigger and bigger.”

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