

Jayne Kirkpatrick, Director, Public Affairs
Prepared by: John Boyette, Public Affairs Specialist

For more information: Doug Grissom, Assistant Director, Raleigh Convention Center, 831-6011, Raleigh World Wide Expo; Kathy Jones Knudsen, Executive Director, International Focus Inc., 832-4331, International Festival.

Sept. 5, 2008

RALEIGH WORLD WIDE EXPO, INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL HEADLINE CONVENTION CENTER GRAND OPENING

A massive display of exhibits featuring local businesses and organizations and a celebration of dance, food and music from other countries will kick off the grand opening of the Raleigh Convention Center today and Saturday. The convention center opening is part of this weekend's Raleigh Wide Open 3, the Capital City's third annual downtown celebration.

The Raleigh World Wide Expo and the International Festival will be held inside the new convention center. Visitors can enjoy the many booths and exhibits of both events from noon to 10 p.m. today and from 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday. Admission is free.

At the first ever Raleigh World Wide Expo there will be up to 150 booths showcasing services provided by local businesses and organizations, including trade groups, museums and the arts community, and the hospitality industry. The City of Raleigh and Wake County also will have booths at the expo to share information about government services.

The Raleigh World Wide Expo will help showcase the convention center's sprawling 150,000-square-foot exhibit hall, said Doug Grissom, assistant director of the Raleigh Convention Center.

If you work up an appetite checking out the Raleigh World Wide Expo, you can head over to the 23rd annual International Festival. This year's festival will feature more food booths and cultural exhibits than in years past. Foods from more than 50 countries -- from Argentina to Yemen --- will be available for purchase. These include such dishes as Chinese sesame chicken, Dutch donuts, lamb shish kebab from Egypt, French crepes and the Greek delicacy spanakopita, to name a few.

In addition to food, the International Festival will feature 25 cultural exhibits and more than 50 entertainment groups which will share dance and music from around the globe. These performers will be dressed in authentic costumes from native countries.

Sponsors of the International Festival are the City of Raleigh, Target, Time Warner Cable, Credit Suisse, Carolina Ford Dealers, Norfolk Southern Corp., Woman's

Club of Raleigh, and Friends of World Music. More than 15,000 people attended last year's festival.