

## D.C. families celebrate mothers, Mexico Holidays come together on the National Mall

By ANNA BAILEY  
Examiner Staff Writer  
Published: Sunday, May 8, 2005 9:03 PM EDT



Members of the mariachi band Sin Fronteras, perform on stage at the Cinco de Mayo Festival on the National Mall on Sunday. *Jay Westcott/Examiner*

[E-mail this story](#) | [Print this page](#)

Mother's Day and Cinco de Mayo coincided on the National Mall Sunday in a celebration of Mexican culture, mothers and family. "This is the best way to celebrate Mother's Day," said Alma Zarate, who sat with her 7-year-old daughter Andrea Mares listening to a mariachi band perform on the National Mall. "I'm far away from my country, so being in touch with my culture is very important to me and my family."

Sitting in her mother's lap, Andrea swayed to the music as they waited for her father and 10-year-old brother to find parking for the Cinco de Mayo "Celebre la Familia" or "Celebrate the Family" festival.

The festival was hosted by DEHSO Productions and the Maru Montero Dance Company. Cinco de Mayo celebrates the Mexican defeat of the French at the Battle of Puebla in 1862.



Sisters Lily Longwell, 4, left, and Dorothy Longwell, 3, right, of Washington, dance and enjoy the festivities. *Jay Westcott/Examiner*

Andrea's focus, however, was less on history than on her mother.

"She's a great mom," said Andrea, who gave her mother a dozen roses that morning and planned to cook dinner for her later. "She takes care of my family."

Andrea and her mother were among a group of people watching the mariachi Sunday at the festival, which was started seven years ago by Maru Montero, former principal dancer with the world renowned Ballet Folklórico de Mexico.

Montero, who founded her eponymous dance company, started the festival to try to introduce more people to what she sees as the true meaning of Cinco de Mayo.

**'Focus is the family'**

"We want to change the meaning of Cinco de Mayo - the margarita, happy hour - for once we don't have alcohol," Montero said. "The focus is the family."

In addition to the mariachi, contemporary Mexican singer Susana Harp and several dance ensembles, there was also authentic Peruvian food and an opportunity for children to make "flower crowns" for their mothers.

**Flower crowns**

Rishi Pandey, 6, was busy coloring in a flower crown made out of a paper plate for his mother. His parents discovered the festival after their monthly visit to the National Gallery of Art. Rashmi Pandey appreciated her son's effort, but said she probably wouldn't wear the new headgear.

"He can have it," she said.

Montero said Cinco de Mayo has become popular in the United States but isn't celebrated as widely in Mexico.

"We are in a need to show who we are and what we are all about," she said. "It's about recognition."

The Mexican Cultural Institute co-sponsored Sunday's event and will continue to celebrate Mexican heritage throughout May with concerts, films and an art exhibit featuring the works of "rotulistas," the creators of Mexican street graphics that advertise small businesses such as shoe repair shops or taco stands.

A complete list of events at the institute can be found at <http://portal.sre.gob.mx/imw>.