



PRESS RELEASE

McLean, VA., January 30, 2025 — Ready to salsa? **The McLean Community Center** (MCC) invites you to the annual **Fiesta del Sol Festival**, a vibrant celebration of Latin American and Caribbean culture. Join the fun on Saturday, March 22, from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., for an evening filled with lively music and dancing, colorful arts and crafts exhibitors, mouthwatering tapas, and expertly crafted cocktails. Admission is free, with tickets for food and beverages available for purchase onsite. Patrons must be 21 years or older to purchase alcoholic beverages. Net proceeds from the event will go to **Friends of McLean Community Center**.

The festivities kick off at 5:00 p.m. with D.C.-based DJ Leo and his seamless mixes and infectious rhythm. At 5:30 p.m. get ready to move as **Salsa Guy Richmond** takes the stage for a dynamic 20-minute salsa class and later cumbia (koo m-bee-uh) and merengue.

At 6:00 p.m. and 9:00 p.m., **Izis, La Enfermera de la Salsa**, will grace the stage to perform tracks from her newest album, *A Mi Manera*. Originally from Puerto Rico, Izis is a nurse in the United States Army with over 17 years of service. When not saving lives, she enriches souls through her music as a talented singer, songwriter, flutist, and designer.

Pablo Antonio y La Firma will turn up the beat with a performance at 8:00 p.m. Originally from El Salvador, Pablo Antonio began performing at age 10 in Arlington, Virginia. His band's celebration of merengue and cumbia has garnered international acclaim and is sure to get everyone on the dance floor.

Prepare your taste buds for a flavor explosion as **Sabores Tapas Bar** joins the **Fiesta del Sol Festival**. Sabores offers a variety of Spanish and Latin American tapas with a modern twist, with each item modestly priced.

Janguero Mobile Bar will be featured at the event, offering a Rum and Tequila Bar experience. Their expertly crafted cocktails, with a Latin flavor inspiration, will complement the event's lively atmosphere. Don't miss the chance to stop by, grab a drink, and toast to culture, community, and MCC's 50th Anniversary!

In addition to the stellar performances, explore the vibrant marketplace, where you can shop for high-quality handmade goods and one-of-a-kind items. Each of the eight vendors proudly represents their cultural heritage, offering a unique glimpse into the rich traditions of Latin America and the Caribbean.

This year, repeat exhibitors, **MilenaGuro Designs** will debut its new spring collection, blending Peruvian tradition with contemporary design. Each piece is a collaborative masterpiece, brought to life by skilled artisans from various regions of Peru. And, returning to the festival is **Wanaan**, showcasing a stunning selection of handcrafted homewares and accessories, meticulously created by talented artisans from communities across Colombia. Joining us is artist **Benjamin**

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Rodriguez a native of Orocovi, Puerto Rico, has a penchant for watercolor and acrylic paintings. Through his brush, he can capture the beauty and essence of everyday life in his ancestral hometown.

David Amoroso, a native of Arlington, captures the essence of Americana and Mexican pop culture through his dynamic artwork. His pieces vividly portray iconic figures from the past and present, blending bold colors and striking imagery to celebrate cultural identity and heritage.

Fiesta del Sol welcomes two new exhibitors at the Festival. **Steven Morton** offers handmade, "top grain" leather bags, designed for quality and functionality. The true artistry of Native Chilean Craftsmen. And, **Checa Art**, representing Nicaragua, is an abstract painter known for her vibrant, dynamic compositions.

The festival is produced in part by **VIP Impressions Events**. CEO Beatriz Paz shared her thoughts: "The talented men and women involved in the planning and execution of Fiesta del Sol celebrate MCC's support of equity and inclusion."

About VIP Impressions, LLC.

VIP Impressions LLC recognized event planning and management company specializing in creating memorable experiences that bring communities together. From concept to execution, we pride ourselves on delivering high-quality events tailored to meet the unique needs of our clients.

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MUSIC BACKGROUND

Salsa, a popular dance style, originated on the island of Cuba during the 1920s, coinciding with the emergence of various music genres that eventually contributed to the creation of salsa music. Cuba was a melting pot of diverse Latin dance styles, and it was in this environment that Fania, a local Cuban studio, coined the term "salsa" and began playing it on the radio and at clubs. Consequently, salsa music and dance became increasingly popular throughout Cuba, and later spread to South America and Miami. As the music made its way to new regions, musicians picked it up and incorporated new elements, which in turn led to the evolution of the salsa dance with additional moves and styles.

Cumbia is a vibrant style of Latin music that originated in Colombia and has since gained widespread popularity throughout South America, Central America, and the United States. It blends African, Amerindian, and European influences, featuring instruments such as drums, flutes, maracas, and accordions to create its distinctive sound.

Cumbia traces its origins back to the 1800s as a courtship dance created by enslaved Africans along the coasts of Caribbean countries and Colombia. The dance's rhythmic foundation reflects its African heritage, with a focus on percussion and movement. As cumbia evolved in the early 1900s, Indigenous Colombian instruments like drums and flutes were incorporated, enriching its sound. By the 1940s, blended with mariachi and incorporated African and Caribbean influences, such as son, vallenato, and merengue, to develop a unique regional style. Later, European influences added the accordion, further shaping the genre into what we recognize today.

Cumbia is more than just music; it is a celebration of cultural fusion and resilience. Its enduring appeal lies in its ability to adapt while preserving its rich history and heritage, making it a unifying force across generations and regions.