

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY



PHOTO BY BETH HALL

The Culturas Unidas Festival included dance groups.

2025 Culturas Unidas Festival in Marion celebrated Hispanic heritage, resilience on Saturday

BY MIKE CONLEY
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On Saturday, downtown Marion filled with sights, sounds and flavors of Latin American culture as hundreds of people came out to celebrate the fourth annual Culturas Unidas Festival.

The colorful event, hosted by Centro Unido Latino Americano, celebrates the history, traditions, culture and stories of the Latino population in McDowell County, and has grown each year.

This year, the emphasis was on the resilience of the McDowell County community following the destruction caused by Hurricane Helene a year ago.

“In the wake of Hurricane Helene, I witnessed something powerful — neighbors helping neighbors, cultures coming together, and a community rising through compassion and resilience,” said Margarita Ramirez, executive director of Centro Unido. “The Culturas Unidas Festival theme ‘United After Helene’ is born from that spirit. It’s more than a celebration of our heritage. It’s a tribute to the unity that carried us through the storm.”



MIKE CONLEY, MCDOWELL NEWS

Marion’s Culturas Unidas Festival was held Saturday. It is organized each year by Centro Unido Latino Americano.

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Meeting addresses homelessness in Marion

BY MIKE CONLEY
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Marion city officials, downtown business owners, representatives of Mission Ministries Alliance, local law enforcement officers, McDowell County officials and other community leaders gathered last week to discuss homelessness in Marion.

The meeting took place Tuesday, Sept. 9, at the Marion Depot.

The meeting was a continuation of a previous discussion that took place before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dawna Goode Ledbetter, director of equity for West Marion Inc., served as the facilitator and leader of the meeting.

“There was a homeless roundtable meeting pre-COVID,” she said. “I think there have been complaints from the business owners about the unsheltered, so the purpose of (Tuesday’s) meeting was to bring together city leaders, community agencies and service providers to share information, discuss current challenges related to hous-

ing and homelessness and begin identifying opportunities for collaboration and coordinated solutions.”

Ledbetter said she was asked to facilitate, but this was not a meeting organized by West Marion Inc.

The meeting’s purpose was

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High 73
Low 59
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