

## Lanterns light up Lawrence's Canal Street

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LAWRENCE — The work of local schoolchildren lit up Canal Street last night.

Dozens of handmade lanterns were hung along North Canal as part of Canal IllumiNations, an annual event that celebrates the city's rich heritage through art, music and dance. "It's a great way to get people to come out and enjoy what Lawrence has to offer," said Karen Wood, project manager for Live Lawrence!

Music filled the air last night as about 400 people lined Canal Street for a variety of entertainment, including Afro-American, Latino and Mexican music; performances by Capoeira, a Brazilian martial arts troupe; and Mirabal Family Comparsa, Dominican dancers.

A big draw for the event is the tradition of floating lanterns created by children from throughout the city. In past years, the lanterns were lowered into the canal. But cleaning up later was difficult, so this year, organizers decided to hang the lanterns along the canal instead.

Jullisa Alfonzo, the school-age director at the YMCA, snapped photos of lanterns created by kids she knew.

"They had to create something that would represent them," Alfonzo explained.

Jack Higginbottom, 11, of South Lawrence, a fifth-grader at Bradford Christian Academy, volunteered last night. Jack and his mother helped children make their own lanterns from soda bottles, tissue paper and pipe cleaners. Jack then poured sand into the bottles to weigh them down.

When asked why he was volunteering at the event, Jack said, "Because it's my city."

His mother, Debbie Higginbottom, a 20-year employee at Lawrence General Hospital, said she believes community involvement is important, no matter what your age.

"It's nice to volunteer when you can," she said.

Meanwhile, Niurka Aybar, who works in community relations at Northern Essex Community College, surveyed the crowd. She wanted to know where they came from.

A variety of local agencies sponsored the event, including NECC, Cambridge College, Groundwork Lawrence, Lawrence Heritage State Park, Essex Art Center, Washington Mills apartments and the city of Lawrence.