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Exhibit celebrates festivals

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By Carley Dangona

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WESTFIELD — For the month of August, the Westfield Athenaeum features a photography exhibit by Longmeadow native, Amy Dane, in the Jasper Rand Art Museum, entitled, "Six Foreign Festivals: Spectators and Performers."

The display provides glimpses of people from the Naadam Festival in Mongolia; Timkat in Ethiopia; Sing-Sings from Papua New Guinea; Holi in India; Tshechu from Bhutan; and a Dogon Funeral Dance of West Africa.

"It's a wonderful exhibit," Christopher Lindquist, director of Westfield Athenaeum said.

A life-long, avid traveler, having visited more than 90 countries, Dane recently began displaying her photography, "I've been traveling forever, but I just started exhibiting my photography," she said.

"I always love a festival because not only are the performers colorful, but so are the spectators," Dane said. "Some countries are more subtle and the festivals bring out the people. For example, in Mongolia, the festival really lit up the country."

Dane explained her love of people-watching. "My forté is people's faces — I love to photograph people" she said.

The transition from traveler to artist was natural for Dane, who holds a Master's in art history and spent 11 years working for the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. "I'm a natural curator at heart," Dane said.

Physically setting up the show with a helper took two and a half hours; overall, Dane said the entire process for compiling a showcase is one "that goes on over months and months," especially since she has "many thousand" photographs from which to choose.

"The pictures are impossible to narrow down," Dane said. "It's the hardest part of putting together and exhibit."

Dane stated, "I hope it [the exhibit] will encourage people to see that they can get more out of festivals, here or abroad, more than just the focal point [of the festival]."

For more information about the exhibit or the Westfield Athenaeum, visit <http://www.westath.org/> or call 568-7833. For more information about Amy Dane, visit <http://www.amydaneadventures.com/>.



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Amy Dane, with participants of a Sing-Sing, on Kiriwina Island, part of the Trobriand Islands.
Photo courtesy of Amy Dane

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