

## **DINFOS Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month**

Story by Navy Seaman Nicolas N. Lopez

Students and faculty alike joined in an observance of Hispanic Heritage Month on Friday in the Hall of Heroes at the Defense Information School on Fort Meade.

Speakers included Navy Seaman Hansel Pintos, a student in Basic Mass Communications Specialist Course 060-12 at DINFOS, as well as Navy Seaman Recruit Sarah Villegas, a student in Basic Mass Communications Specialist Course 040-12.

"It was an important event to have on base, because it celebrates diversity," said Pintos, who was born in Colombia. "They take the opportunity to celebrate Hispanic heritage, but that's part of the bigger picture."

The observance used a lot of volunteered food, heirlooms, and voices to fit a budget, said Staff Sgt. Carrie Fox, a broadcasting instructor at DINFOS who supervised the event. This was the first time DINFOS used student speakers for a Heritage Month observance, and that part went very smoothly, she said.

Villegas, one of the student speakers, recounted her experiences as the child of an immigrant who joined the U.S. Navy.

"I was really nervous to speak, but I felt it was important to help because I have had many opportunities, which I have been awarded from people like my father who serve," Villegas said with a quiet joy that seemed to work its way into her every word.

At the observance, Villegas even discovered new aspects of Hispanic culture, such as a Columbian heirloom loaned by a DINFOS staff member, that she found similar to the Mexican art she sees at home.

"I think it was really awesome that they had a table that featured different little things that represented the culture," Villegas said. "I'm Mexican, but I really liked this Columbian artwork I saw on the table. I thought it was awesome. It's interesting to see how traditional culture changes between countries."

Among the people who attended the ceremony was Navy Seaman Eddy Gutierrez, a student in Basic Mass Communications Specialist Course 060-12 at DINFOS.

"I thought for being such a small ceremony, it was really well done," said Gutierrez, who was raised in New Orleans and is of French descent.

"There were people of other nationalities doing the salsa dances," Gutierrez said. "I got caught up in the moment with all the dancing and the food."

"I really enjoyed it," said Gutierrez. "I didn't realize the salsa was all so simple."

Pintos, Villegas, and Gutierrez said they not only learned about Hispanic culture but also about the military and its cornucopia of different people.

"It's a very equal environment," Pintos said proudly. "It doesn't matter your background, where you came from -- it's a reflection of America itself."