

Local & Region

QUOTE OF NOTE

“That’s where I learned to argue with myself.”

Supreme Court Justice Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar, referring to his time on the mock trial team

QUESTIONS? Contact Local Content Editor Richard Montenegro Brown at rbrown@ivpressonline.com or 760-337-3453.

IT'S TEA TIME!

Mothers, daughters dress up for CUHS mock trial team tea party



Abigail Huerta, 3, of El Centro makes her way under a jump rope during a game of limbo at the Mother-Daughter Tea Party, hosted Thursday by the Central Union High School Mock Trial Team. ELIZABETH VARIN PHOTOS

BY ELIZABETH VARIN | Digital Media News Editor

Mothers, daughters, grandmothers and cousins wore fancy dresses, wide-brimmed hats, gloves and pearls fitting for a formal tea party at Central Union High School. The school’s mock trial team hosted a mother-daughter tea party Thursday evening in the school’s multi-purpose room. The team expected about 60 people to attend, said adviser Anna Vizcaino. However, team members were setting up extra tables and grabbing more chairs as the room was filled with nicely dressed female family members.



FROM LEFT: Cousins Isabella and Diana Bermudez sit together in fancy dresses and hats during the mother-daughter tea party.

One of the best parts of the event for mock trial adviser Vizcaino is seeing all the mothers and daughters dressing up. “My favorite part is seeing all the little girls with their dresses and hats,” she said. “This is really me. I like to dress up.”

Jayleen Beltran looks at her grandmother Tina Torres during the mother-daughter tea party. It was Jayleen’s first formal tea party event.

There are events for fathers and daughters, and for mothers and sons, but Thursday’s event was really about the mother-daughter bond. “Sometimes you forget there’s a special bond between daughters and mothers,” Vizcaino said.



CUHS mock trial team members Kiana Nava pours water into tea cups for attendees of the mother-daughter tea.

The event was not only a way for the mock trial team to get out into the community, Vizcaino said, but also a fundraiser for next year. The team wants to be able to go to a mock trial academy at Harvard University, and funds from Thursday’s event went toward that trip.



IMPERIAL VALLEY DESERT MUSEUM



Gretchen Laue and Mario Bustamante look at a book that was part of the silent auction at the wine tasting event Thursday. ELIZABETH VARIN PHOTOS

Music, wine help raise funds for museum

BY ELIZABETH VARIN
Digital Media News Editor

It was a night of music, wine and talk of museum exhibits.

The Imperial Valley Desert Museum Society held a wine-tasting event Thursday that was part fundraiser and part museum update, said Antonio Rivera, museum society board member. The board expected about 100 people for the event, which took place at the El Centro Elks Lodge.

In addition to the wine-tasting, silent auction and music selection, there were presentations on the museum and updates that have been taking place there.

The museum is going through a three-phase upgrade, and the first of those phases has just recently been completed, said Desert Museum Society President Charles Fisher. That included bringing in an archaeology section, getting some of the best artifacts ready for display, completing a topographical map of Southern California and more. Upcoming is the second phase, which Fisher said he hopes is complete by the end of the month. That phase includes 360-degree panoramic interactive images of the desert, graphics that slide out of rock displays and wildlife statues that people can take photos with.

What is still left of the upgrade needs funding, Fisher said. The third phase, which is set to

cost between \$250,000 and \$300,000, would be displays for fifth- and sixth-graders on field trips. Part of it would focus on geothermal energy in the Imperial Valley.

Museum lovers listened in while Fisher and Frank Salazar III gave updates on the progress taking place at the Ocotillo location. They also enjoyed a selection of white, red and desert wines and a chance to win door prizes.

Mario Bustamante and Gretchen Laue made sure to take a look at the table displaying various silent auction items, from books and jewelry, to pottery and more.

The museum is an important part of the Imperial Valley, Bustamante said. If they can help, even a little, that would be great.

There have been some impressive things going on with the museum, including the historical content featured in the Imperial Valley Press, Laue added. That’s one of the things museums should be doing.

Overall, board member Rivera said he hoped to raise about \$1,500 from ticket sales and a lot more in contributions. It’s important that the Valley keeps supporting the facility.

“The museum belongs to the Valley, and with the Valley’s help it will continue and continue growing.”

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Sharon Sparks pours wine for one of the attendees of the Imperial Valley Desert Museum wine tasting on Thursday at the Elks Lodge in El Centro.

New winner crowned at annual salsa contest

BY JULIO MORALES
Staff Writer, Copy Editor

CALEXICO — Aurora Marroquin has been entering salsa contests in the Valley for nearly three decades now. For her efforts, she has walked away a first-place winner a total of seven times, with her most recent win last weekend. On Thursday, she found herself back in the fray, competing against seven others in the 24th annual Mariachi Sin Fronteras Viva Calexico salsa contest here. Although the El Centro resident had won first place at the annual contest the past two years running, she said this year’s competition was a bit more intimidating.

“I’m think I’m ready to give up the crown,” Marroquin said in Spanish.

The annual salsa contest dates back to 2000, when the Calexico Chamber of Commerce took over the mariachi festival’s organiz-

ing duties from the now-defunct Imperial County Arts Council, said Hildy Carrillo, chamber executive director. Since then, the chamber, working with the city of Calexico, has added a tequila-tasting event, a Mariachi Idol contest, an artists’ fair as well as the salsa contest.

“We added that Mexican flavor,” she said. Five judges were on hand Thursday to score contestants salsas based on their taste, presentation and originality. Cash prizes of \$40, \$20 and \$10 were awarded to the top three place winners, in descending order, and all three took home a complimentary mariachi festival T-shirt as well as two tickets to Saturday’s mariachi concert.

“It’s all about being involved and doing it for the prestige,” Carrillo said. First-time contestant Yoly Lara said she and a friend encouraged each oth-



Juanita Esparza (left) stands by as salsa contest judge Janina Farias samples Esparza’s salsa during the 24th annual Mariachi Sin Fronteras Viva Calexico salsa contest Thursday at the Carmen Durazo Cultural Arts Center in Calexico. Esparza would beat out seven other contestants and be crowned this year’s winner. JULIO MORALES PHOTO

er to enter the contest. An accomplished cook, Lara said she first learned how to cook from her grandmother when she was about 14 years old.

“That’s when they finally let me

get close to the stove,” Lara said in Spanish. For her salsa, Lara said she added grilled tomatoes and tomatillos, which is a favorite among her family and friends.

“Whenever we get together

they always tell me to bring the salsa,” the Calexico resident said.

Ultimately, it was Calexico resident Juanita Esparza who would be crowned the contest winner. Judge and classically trained pastry chef Janina Farias said Esparza’s salsa was a perfect balance of tastiness and spiciness.

“I could eat it all day long,” Farias said. “All it needed was a beer.” Esparza said she had heard about the salsa contest through the years, but never had considered entering. Actually, she hadn’t decided to enter this year until a day before the contest. For her entry, Esparza used her go-to salsa, which included tomato, onion, cilantro and chiles.

She makes a fresh 64-ounce batch of it about every five days, the time it takes her household, which includes six children, to finish it.

“There has to be salsa in the house,” she said in Spanish.