

# Local & Region

## QUOTE OF NOTE

**“State protection could be the difference between life and death for these unique creatures.”**

Ileene Anderson, a biologist with the Center for Biological Diversity, on flat-tailed horned lizards

**QUESTIONS?** Contact Local Content Editor Richard Montenegro Brown at [rbrown@ivpressonline.com](mailto:rbrown@ivpressonline.com) or 760-337-3453.

## IMPERIAL VALLEY DESERT MUSEUM

# Museum awarded National Endowment for the Humanities grants

BY SANDY SIERRA  
Staff Writer

The Imperial Valley Desert Museum is set to receive two national grants that will improve their ability to care for their humanities collection and permanently fund two staff positions.

The National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency, announced grant awards for the 2015 grant period, including 29 grants to California institutions, according to a museum press release.

The desert museum was awarded both a Preservation Assistance Grant and

a Challenge Grant. The Preservation Assistance Grant is for \$4,255 and the Challenge Grant is for \$260,000.

“The award of these two NEH grants distinguishes the Desert Museum collections as nationally significant and worthy of recognition,” said Neal Hitch, director of the museum. “We know our archaeological collections from the Imperial Valley are important locally, but to receive these two national grants puts us into a different conversation.”

For Hitch, receiving more than one grant was an exceptionally unique experience.



Neal Hitch, executive director of the Imperial Valley Desert Museum since 2011, has big plans for the museum's exhibits. IMPERIAL PRESS VALLEY FILE PHOTO

“This is a highly competitive grant. It's extremely unusual to receive two,” Hitch added. “One of the things we are really proud

and reinforced that the collections here are really significant. The things that are going on here are really significant.”

Congressman Juan Vargas also commended the museum.

“The Imperial Valley Desert Museum is a true asset that promotes and preserves the historical richness of the region,” Vargas said. “These awards will enable the museum to continue its work and to also establish new programs and present new exhibitions.”

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## BRINGING A COLORFUL CHRISTMAS TO DOWNTOWN IMPERIAL



Colorful handmade Christmas decorations attract guests of the annual Christmas in a Small Town event in Imperial early Saturday morning. ERIC MILLER PHOTO

**Video Online**  
See video for this article at [www.ivpressonline.com](http://www.ivpressonline.com)

## ROLLERZ ONLY VALLE IMPERIAL CAR SHOW AND TOY DRIVE



A local takes in vintage cars during the Rollerz Only Valle Imperial Car Show and Toy Drive, in collaboration with the California Highway Patrol's "Chips for Kids" program, at the Farmers' Market in Brawley Saturday. SANDY SIERRA PHOTO

# Farmers' market, toy drive, car show attracts new attendees

BY SANDY SIERRA  
Staff Writer

BRAWLEY — For the first time, the Brawley Chamber of Commerce teamed up with the Rollerz Only Valle Imperial Car Club and the California Highway Patrol to bring numerous events to the farmers' market here Saturday.

In addition to the already popular vendors and entertainment at each farmers' market, this year the chamber decided it would be nice to work together this holiday season, said Jason Zara, chamber executive director.

This was the second year the car club has teamed up with CHP in its “Chips for Kids” program to bring toys to deserving children, and club president Jesse Herrera hopes it gets bigger and bigger every year.

“Last year we did it at Hinojosa Park but since we are chamber members, we decided to make it one big event,” he said. “People who enter their car into the show are encouraged to bring along an unwrapped toy and we also encourage locals who come to the farmers' market to bring in toys also.”

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**Video Online** [www.ivpressonline.com](http://www.ivpressonline.com)



Imperial County Sheriff's Office employees fill their baskets with toys picked by a child accompanying them during the annual Shop with a Cop event held at Target in El Centro early Saturday afternoon. ERIC MILLER PHOTO

# Shop with a Cop delights local children

BY KARINA LOPEZ  
Staff Writer

The sirens blaring through here late Saturday morning were not signaling a fire or medical emergency, but rather the start of an annual event that brings smiles, toys and positive memories to some of the underprivileged children living in Imperial County.

The annual Shop with a Cop partnered 90 local children with an officer from one of the many local law enforcement agencies in Imperial County, who

then guided the excited shoppers through the aisles of Target.

Alonzo Rivera said his morning was “awesome” and while he was enjoying looking for a new Nerf gun along with his two younger siblings, the procession of law enforcement vehicles from Southwest High School to Target was something he would remember for a long time.

“We got to ride in the police car,” the 8-year-old said with a smile. “It was a lot of fun.”

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# Community takes in annual small-town Christmas event

BY KARINA LOPEZ  
Staff Writer

IMPERIAL — After welcoming hundreds of community members for the annual Parade of Lights on Friday night, the city's downtown was once again flooded with families and pets on Saturday for the annual Christmas in a Small Town.

The 26-year street fair is a tradition for many local families, and is beginning to catch the eye of families, groups and vendors from outside of the city.

One such group was the band and orchestra students from Kennedy Middle School in El Centro.

The students took turns playing for the crowd in small groups and on their break took time to see the many vendors in attendance.

Emily Bustamante said she had taken in the event before as well as the parade and was looking forward to walking along the downtown area.

“I like coming because I like all the food,” the 13-year-old said with



Fiona Chell, 1-and-1/2 years old, plays with a hula hoop during her visit to Christmas in a Small Town early Saturday morning in downtown Imperial. ERIC MILLER PHOTO

a laugh. Priscilla Rojas said she was also looking forward to taking in the sights after playing a 45-minute set with the band.

“This is our first year coming,” the 14-year-old said. “It's fun.” In addition to the El Centro school, Imperial elementary school students entertained the crowd with traditional Christmas songs.

Kaitie Parker said she enjoyed the event because it brought the community together and gave locals the opportunity to support local products.

“We love the farmers' markets, too, because we get fresh vegeta-

bles and fruits,” she said.

Parker estimated she'd spend more than an hour perusing the different merchants' products, which included soaps, toys, food, decorations and more.

In addition to families, the event drew in excited teens.

“My dad said we should do something fun (Saturday) so we decided to come,” 13-year-old Jesus Palomino said. “We usually come every year. It's fun because you get to see stuff you normally don't get to see.”

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## 10TH YEAR OF PARADE OF LIGHTS

# Calipatria celebrates Christmas in the Dark

BY SANDY SIERRA  
Staff Writer

CALIPATRIA — Locals flocked to Rademacher Park as the town lit up the town square for this city's annual holiday celebration Saturday.

Calipatria's Christmas in the Dark brought in people from surrounding areas as it celebrated the holidays with vendors, a parade of lights and a toy giveaway.

“I believe we are in our 10th year of organizing this event,” said Maria Nava-Froelich, city mayor. “It's something that started because the community asked for it. It

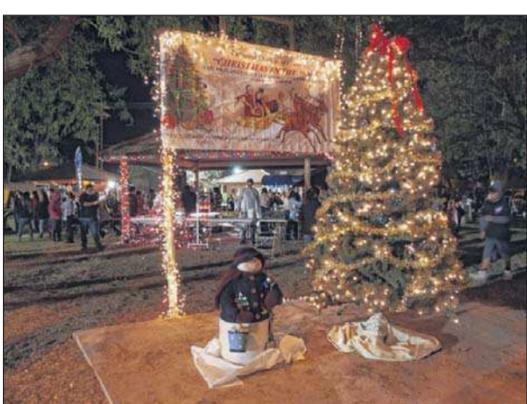
started off small and now it has grown. Every year, we have a parade and have Santa towards the end, giving away toys. This year, we are handing out candy bags for the children.”

Johnny and Dora Chavez were selected as this year's grand marshals.

“They were selected because they have given outstanding community service and we wanted to show them our token of appreciation,” Nava-Froelich added.

Yalvany Valenzuela enjoys coming to this event with her parents.

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Attendees from Calipatria and surrounding areas made it out to Christmas in the Dark, a local holiday celebration featuring vendors, a parade of lights, and gifts by Santa Claus, Saturday evening. SANDY SIERRA PHOTO