

Craft lovers brave cold to attend 2nd Street Arts Festival

Written by By Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Craft fairs mark the season

Jack Frost made his presence known on Nov. 18, as craft lovers braved the cold to attend various craft fairs throughout the city. This year's 2nd Street Arts Festival featured dozens of artists and vendors, along with live music, food and the Kids' Craft Corner. The event was sponsored in part of SSAF, GallupARTS and the Gallup Lodgers Tax.

Next to the homemade crafts, baked goodies were on display to tantalize the sugar monster. Talented jewelry artists from around the area also came to proudly show off their crafts. Necklaces, bracelets, and earrings filled with native stones from the Southwest caught the eyes of many.

The event began at 10 am and the cold weather would determine the ending, as Drey Hamilton said.

"There were so many arts and crafts to see but the weather [began] to bite. If only it was just a little bit warmer," she said.

Veterans Helping Veterans also held their craft fair at the old senior center, as did the Rio West Mall, which held their 3rd Annual Holiday Craft Fair.

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Red Rock Care Center displayed their Angel tree. A purchase of an angel meant a gift would be given to a resident of the care center. The gift could be just a simple scarf or hat, but it showed the resident that he was thought of during the holidays.

Dawes Wilson chose to donate money directly to the center instead of purchasing an angel, to help cover any expenses.

"I just thought I do what I can afford, and pass the love onto an elderly grandpa or grandma and to let them know they are loved this Christmas," she said. "I know some of them don't have family to come visit them for whatever reason."

The center also put on a cake walk that anyone could join in for the chance to win a delicious homemade cake or other goodie. Shoppers made their way around various vendors selling air brushed T-shirts, hand painted Christmas ornaments, and even sweet smelling soaps from SHIMA' of Navajoland.

Judy Begay of SHIMA' of Navajoland says the soaps are made from different Native herbs gathered here in the Southwest.

The herbs that are collected are named for the soaps such as: Bluecorn, Mint Clan, Navajo tea and Grandmother Mountain. SHIMA' of Navajoland also sold honey, which was taken from their own hives at their shop in Fort Defiance, Ariz.

"It's been going pretty good. What we're doing is making business advertising for Christmas gifts," Begay said. "These are just our raw material that we have and for showing and displaying for Christmas. We've had positive feedback on them."

Brock Elmore, who helps in making the tea, has been working with SHIMA' of Navajoland for a year, and starting out making compost.

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"A lot of the soil that I was turning I decided to plant some of the herbs like blue corn. I picked it, shucked it, and grinded it down to put it in the soap," Elmore said. "I even use Yucca extract from the Yucca plant, and different other types of oil. As for the tea, you can find Navajo tea all over the reservation."

Alphonso John, who owns JJJ's Beaded Jewelry, displayed his handcrafted jewelry with a unique magnet lock. Normally, bracelets and necklaces have a clasp to keep the jewelry on your neck or arm. John came up with a magnetic clasp that clasps itself, which keeps the piece from falling off. This idea has helped his sales.

"The craft fair is going really great actually, good turnout. I figured it was going to be a slow morning but it turned out to be pretty busy," John said.

John does all the bead work himself, but also gets help from his family, though on Nov. 18 they were at other craft shows.

"They would have been here with me, but they are out displaying our jewelry as well," he said.

Joyce Toledo-Bayle, of Crafts by Joyce, proudly showed off one-of-a-kind signs that she made and designed herself.

"I have an online store on Facebook where I do a lot of personalized crafts, from T-shirts to wood signs, glass etching, anything I can think off," she said. "The craft fair has been really good. I just do this on the side, I'm a teacher by profession this is just a hobby for me."

Anyone who missed out on the Nov. 18 fair will still get the chance to support local artists. Several more craft fairs will be coming up in the area as the holidays approach.

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