

Celebrating a community



Jon Chown/Register-Pajaronian

Airman First Class Kendrick Childers (in front) and Senior Airman Demyrio Harris from Travis Air Force Base line up 11-year-old Justin Blair (front left) and others from Boy Scout Troop 504 and Cub Scout Troop 515 before the start of the parade Sunday during Aromas Day in Aromas.

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Thousands come to enjoy old-fashioned Aromas Day festivities

By JON CHOWN

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

AROMAS — Frank Romero, 24, has lived in Aromas his whole life. On Sunday, the aspiring artist was out in front of his home on Carpenteria Road showing his latest acrylic paintings, priced

from \$60 to \$200.

Bright colors and wild lines decorated his lawn. Passers-by viewed the images of odd cartoon characters, space scenes and other more down-to-earth images. Living right on the main strip of town, Romero was taking advantage of the thousands of

people in town for Aromas Day.

Romero's passion for art goes back to his days at North Monterey County High, but he recently rediscovered his love for painting and is dedicating

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himself to improving and earning a living at it.

"Since 2008 I've been taking it very seriously," he said. "I can't imagine my life without painting."

Besides painting, Romero said he loves Aromas and its charming small-town life. Aromas Day is a special day for Romero, who has memories of the community event that date back to his earliest days in childhood.

The day is celebrated with a parade and a downtown carnival-like atmosphere with booths and music. Most of all, yard sales. Most downtown yards were filled with household items for sale.

"I just remember running around town with my friends, buying comic books, food, toys, being with friends, family and eating barbecue," Romero said.

Across the street and down the block, Wilma and Tom Brumit were selling their handiwork as well. Wilma has a green thumb and her husband is a bit of a woodworker, so as he builds planters, sometimes in the shape of a wheelbarrow or other garden theme, she fills them with cacti or flowers. Brumit was selling the pieces for as little as \$5.

"I've been doing this during Aromas Day ever since I lived here it seems, 32-33 years," she said. "I sell every year; it's a good way to get rid of old stuff."

Just how many years Aromas Day has been occurring is a bit of mystery to those in attendance. Richard Saxe, who is in charge of the Aromas Day planning committee, said the event is more than 20 years old, but changed eight years ago after a brief hiatus. The event's history entails a lot of drinking and some problems along the way, he said.

"It just got a little out of hand and there was nobody in charge to go talk about it to," Saxe said.

So, after canceling the event for a couple of years, the Aromas Eagles, the major philanthropic group of the town, agreed to underwrite Aromas Day and insure the event through its policy, Saxe said. Now, the event raises money for many different charities, as all food vendors are tied to a non-profit.

"Now it just keeps getting bigger and better every year," Saxe said. "The whole day is about raising funds for local nonprofits. It's just grown into a wonderful family event and we love it."

The parade at 2 p.m. highlighted the day. Saxe said he was especially proud to have members of the U.S. Air Force come up to Aromas from Travis Air Force Base to carry the U.S. flag in the parade. Those same soldiers were in the parking lot before the parade prepping members of Boy Scout Troop 504 and Cub Scout Troop 575 on how to march and behave while carrying flags behind them.

"They said to keep in order and don't be all over the place," said 11-year-old Justin Blair, who would be leading his friends in the parade. "And don't be laughing when you're walking."



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ABOVE: Members of Banda 57, formerly Banda Santa Cruz, prepare to march in the parade Sunday at Aromas Day in Aromas. **BELOW:** Frank Romero (facing camera) talks about his artwork for sale in front of his home in Aromas during Aromas Day on Sunday. **BOTTOM:** Tom and Wilma Brumit's yard is full of items for sale Sunday during Aromas Day as Wilma (at left) sells some plants to customers.

