



Joanna Rodriguez and Ruby Carranza of Davenport's Arcoiris Ballet Folklorico company perform at Saturday's Cinco de Mayo fest.

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Hundreds flock to Cinco de Mayo celebration

Holiday -
Cinco de Mayo

Arizona immigration law on the minds of celebrants

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DAVENPORT — Homemade traditional Mexican food, children dancing in vibrant dresses and live bands drew hundreds of families, neighbors and friends to the Davenport Resource Service Center on Saturday for the annual Cinco de Mayo fiesta.

Hungry guests lined up to devour in seconds the food that took volunteers three days to prepare.

"These are secret recipes from our volunteers," said Luz Fuentes, program director at the center. "They'll [cook] for us but they won't tell us."

For the past three years, Francisco Vazquez has prepared his beef birria for the event. This year, he prepared 150 pounds of beef. Guests could also choose from chicken mole, tostadas, rice and beans and desserts.

"It's a real homegrown, community celebration and that's what makes it so nice," Supervisor Neal Coonerty said. "I come every year. It's an opportunity to run into people you don't see at work and to catch up on what's going on with their kids."

Wearing traditional Mexican dresses with ribbons tied in their hair, friends Joanna Rodriguez, 12 and Ruby Carranza, 11, performed twice with the dance group Ballet Folklorico Arcoiris.

"My favorite part is the dancing," Joanna said. "Everyone just looks at you and not anyone else. It's a lot of fun."

The two performed with four others as parents and the crowd clapped along to the music.

Belinda Steele of Santa Cruz and her family have been attending the celebration for the past six years.

"It's so quaint," Steele said. "The raffle tickets are a draw, the food is delicious, the music is wonderful. It's gotten bigger since we first came. I remember when it was just inside the center. Now we take up the whole street. It's a nice trip up from Santa Cruz to



Alicia Stewart of Davenport helps dish up lunch at the town's Cinco de Mayo celebration Saturday.

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spend time here, support the community and enjoy the day."

All the money made from food sales, raffles and silent auction are given back to the Davenport Resource Service Center, which serves about 1,000 people every year. The center provides food and clothing for low-income families and the homeless, legal and medical referrals, and programs for children and seniors.

Bruce Hobson, program assistant at the center, said the tradition of coming together to celebrate Mexican and Chicano culture is a testament to the strength of local pride in light of Arizona's passing an immigration law that requires local and state law enforcement to question people about their immigration status if there's reason to suspect they're in the country illegally. It also makes it a state crime to be in the United States illegally.

"There is an extreme awareness of what is happening in Arizona," Hobson said. "We're here 1,000 miles away from the border in Arizona, but what happened there is felt by the people here who do come back and forth and risk their lives to make a living. Cinco de Mayo is really held in the spirit of the Mexican people as a whole as they hold onto their culture and their basic human rights."

Doug Keegan, an attorney with the Santa Cruz County Immigration Project, addressed the crowd and praised the celebration as a positive form of progress in contrast with Arizona's new law. "This celebration stands in stark contrast to the division and polarization that sometimes exists in California and now certainly in Arizona," Keegan said. "This willingness to embrace other cultures in the end is going to lead to a richer culture for all of us."