

# Celebrating Cinco de Mayo

*Holiday - Cinco de Mayo*

Festival held  
in downtown  
Watsonville  
on Sunday

By DAVE BROOKS

OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Hundreds of people filled downtown Watsonville Sunday to celebrate Cinco de Mayo, the 141<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the defeat of French imperialist forces in Puebla, Mexico. Thankfully there were no battles at the Watsonville event, although the current political climate did allow for a little anti-French sentiment.

Participants at Sunday's event spoke of the pride in their Hispanic culture. "Today, I am proud to be a Mexican-American," said Ramon Garcia of Watsonville. "We often take for granted our heritage, who we are, what we come from. It's good to assimilate into American society and become part of the dominant culture, but we need to regularly reflect on our history and never forget our ancestors."

The event, hosted by Oscar Rios and the group Fiestas Patrias de Watsonville, was the 13th annual celebration of the Mexican holiday held in Watsonville. The group also sponsors the celebration of Mexican Independence Day held each September.

Union Street and the downtown plaza were abuzz with visitors eager to catch a glimpse of one of the many dance performances and theatrical presentations taking place.

Sunday's acts included a live Mariachi performance, traditional Aztec dance by the locally renowned White Hawk dancers and interpretative ballet by groups like Nuevas Raices of Castroville.

Juan Castrano reminded patrons that the holiday was about celebrating a key point in Mexico's history, despite what alcoholic beverage companies lead people to believe. "Many people think Cinco de Mayo is an excuse to get drunk and celebrate Mexican Independence, but they couldn't be any more wrong," he said.

Cinco de Mayo commemorates the defeat of the French army by a Mexican army nearly half its size about 100 miles east of Mexico City in 1862. Under the rule of Emperor Napoleon III, the French force invaded Mexico under colonial guises, only to have their advanced army destroyed

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Watsonville was the scene of many different Mexican traditional outfits Sunday during the 13th annual Cinco de Mayo festival in downtown Watsonville. Organized by Fiestas Patrias de Watsonville, the event featured traditional dancing, food and games for hundreds of people who attended the event.



Youth dancers from Grupo Folklorico Nahuatzen perform a traditional Mexican dance at the Watsonville Cinco de Mayo festival Sunday.

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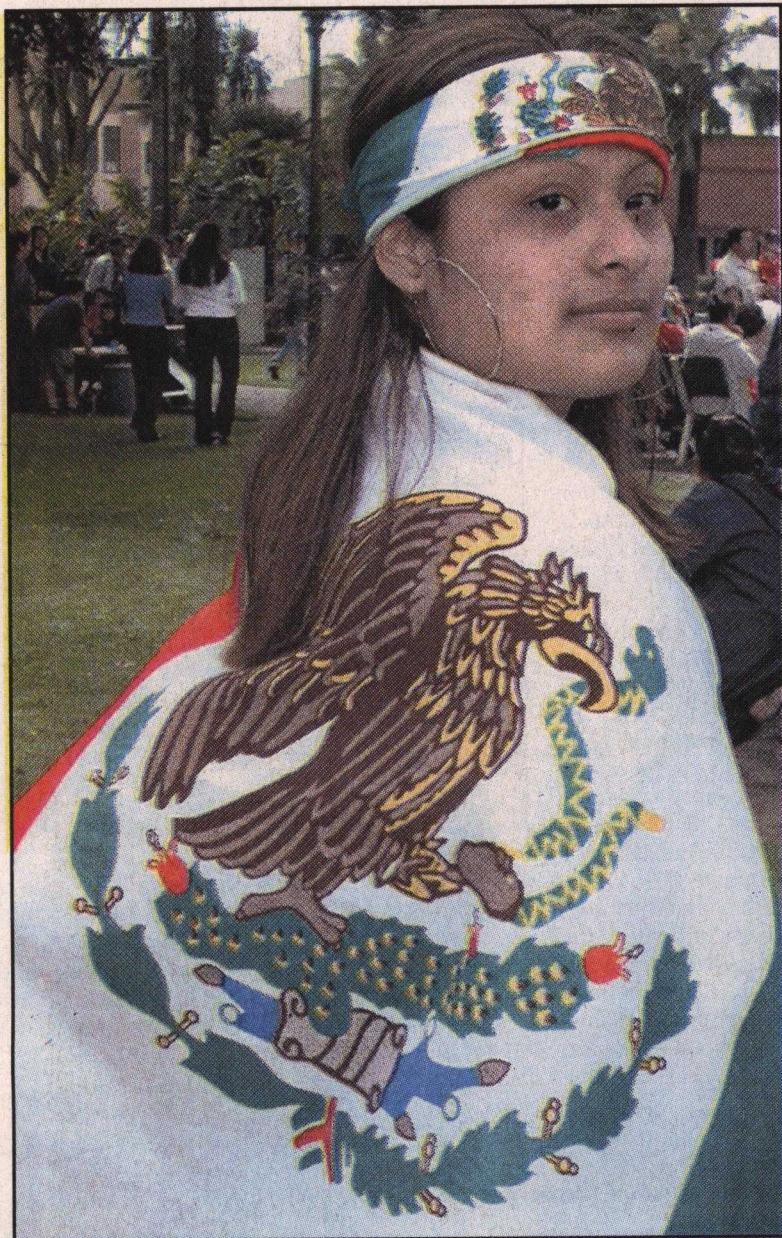
**Blanca Hernandez of the White Hawks leads a dance circle Sunday at the Watsonville Cinco de Mayo festival.**

## CELEBRATION

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by the bravery of General Zaragoza and his army of Mexican irregulars.

Today, many misconstrue the holiday to signify Mexican Independence Day, which occurred on Sept. 15, 1810. Yet for those who know, Cinco de Mayo is a celebration of the will of the Mexican people to protect their homeland and their heritage.



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**Veronica Garcia shows her Mexican spirit with a flag bandana and cape at Sunday's Cinco de Mayo Festival in downtown Watsonville.**