

Santa Cruzans Give Peace A Month

PACENIKS unite. May is Peace Month and a consortium of local groups in Santa Cruz have planned month-long projects to promote the idea of understanding and acceptance among the human species.

There is now a garden at the county courthouse dedicated to the life-long quest of peace by activist and Congress member (1944-46) Hugh De Lacy. A photo exhibit of pictures with a universal theme of harmony by the area's top shutterbugs will run through May 25 at Dancing Man gallery. There is even a campaign to promote peaceful visits from tourists, sponsored by the police department, the Downtown Association and the Seaside Company.

The culmination of Peace Month will happen this Sunday, which is appropriately designated statewide as "Peace Day." Organizers here in Santa Cruz have a daylong event scheduled for the Mission Plaza Park to "bring the community together."

Diversity is the key word here to describe the day's events. Various non-profit groups will have booths displaying their cause and take part in educational or recreational activities related to the elusive quest for peace; for instance, the Resource Center for Non-Violence will have a war-toy trade-in. Multicultural speakers will share the stage with local politicians, war veterans, musicians, African Dance ensembles and Latino comics.

Diane Grunes, a Peace Day organizer, stressed that the event is non-political and is celebratory in nature.

"The whole idea behind Peace Day is 'discovering our common ground,' celebrating our differences and similarities that we have with other people.

Grunes added that some people have a stereotyped idea of what "peace" means.

"For some reason whenever the word 'peace' comes up, people think it's political. This is an event where we are celebrating our differences and similarities, and we really can't do that unless we have the event attended by a diverse group of people," Grunes said.

"This is something that is for everybody. We're not just a bunch of hippies getting together, playing drums and doing dances."

Hippies or not, the Peace Day event has grown enormously over the years, from a small gathering inspired by the play "Peace Child" to a veritable pow-wow of non-profit and other recognized groups getting in on the

peace. The project has worked on homeless issues, and a few months ago, the organization started dialogues with officials from Fort Ord, groups working for social justice, conservative service groups, political parties and elected officials.

The organization is certainly doing something right, as Santa Cruz Peace Day was used as a model for legisla-



Thousands are expected to celebrate peace this weekend.

action. Over 60 groups will be in attendance this year, and last year over 4,000 people attended the day's events and the same number, if not more, is expected this year.

And the Peace Day Project also works year-round to foster harmony in the community, said executive director Bonita Mugnani.

"The bottom line is that we create events all year round that bring people together who would not come together otherwise," said Mugnani. She stressed the various projects that have linked divergent members of the community together.

The Peace Day Race, held recently on West Cliff Drive, was attended by many people from other counties, who came to Santa Cruz to run for

tion introduced by state Assembly-member John Vasconcellos, declaring the third Sunday in May as Peace Day. Other municipalities are using Santa Cruz as a model for planning their own peace days.

A surprise that delighted organizers was the announcement that Señor Antonio Bello, the vice mayor of the Spanish city Santa Cruz de Tenerife, one of Santa Cruz' sister cities, would fly to California for the weekend just for the Santa Cruz event. •

— Rose Dean

To avoid a traffic jam, take the "Peace Shuttle," which leaves the county building every 20 minutes from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. For more information call the Peace Day Project at 475-0207.