

BY CHRISTY HERON

A symphony of strawberries

Find berries, belly dancing, and big, big fun at this year's Strawberry Festival in Arroyo Grande

New Times Tell me about the history of the Arroyo Grande Strawberry Festival and its purpose.

Vivian Krug This is the 24th year, and the Strawberry Festival is put together by the Arroyo Grande Village Improvement Association and it's the only fundraiser that the V.I.A. holds for the year. The Arroyo Grande Village Improvement Association is a group of business owners from the historic section of the A.G. Village. The A.G.V.I.A. pays for the banners, the flowers, the trees in the Village, promotes the Village and tries to get tourism here to the Village of Arroyo Grande. The only fundraiser they have to pay for all of that is the Strawberry Festival.

New Times What is your role with the Strawberry Festival?

Krug I am on the board of the V.I.A. and I'm in charge of the publicity for the Strawberry Festival. I am also on the board of the South County Historical Society.

New Times What other events happen during the Strawberry Festival?

Krug We hold a cooking contest every year, and we invite people to bring in their strawberry recipes. It could be an entrée, a dessert, it doesn't matter. It's really the kick-off for the festival. The winners get published in a cookbook, which benefits the South County Historical Society.

New Times Where can someone buy the cookbook?

Krug At the South County Historical Society (128 Bridge St. in A.G.) and at the Strawberry Festival.

New Times What was the first Strawberry Festival like? How is it different compared to now?

Krug As told by Bob Lund, it started out as an ice cream social, started by John Clark, and a few other merchants. It was very successful for what it was and that is why they continue to do it each year.

New Times What do the vendors typically sell at the Festival? It's more than just arts and crafts, isn't it?

Krug There are 400 different booths, ranging from food to arts and crafts, jewelry, clothing—it is just a ton of variety. They come from all over the United States, and regulars come back each year.

New Times What about the entertainment over the Festival weekend?

Krug We have seven stages throughout the Village and a variety of entertainment, all of which is free. We have the Busy Bee Dog Act, Shival Experience, which draws a huge crowd, Unfinished Business, who are a ton



PHOTO COURTESY OF VIVIAN KRUG

FRESH, JUICY, FUN One of the year's most beloved and berry-licious events, the Strawberry Festival in Arroyo Grande (now 24 years old), takes place May 26 and 27. Three words: Bring your appetite. There will be lots of fresh strawberries for sale, tons of events, and plenty of parking. Go online to find all of the strawberry festival information you hearts and tummies could want at arroyo.grandevillage.org.

of fun.

New Times Do you have artists displaying artwork?

Krug Yes, the El Camino Art Association will showcase a lot of their artists and their work on Bridge Street.

New Times And you're having belly dancers

this year? Is that new?

Krug No, they [Troupe Humana] are back by popular demand at Mason and Bridge streets.

New Times About how many people attend the Strawberry Festival?

Krug About 100,000 people over the two days.

New Times Is there usually a big turnout for your contests, such as the Strawberry Blonde Contest?

Krug There is, and it's a variety of ages, and it's mostly women, but last year we had some cute boys. There's also the Strawberry Stampede, which is huge. There isn't one area that doesn't draw a lot of folks. We try to provide something for everybody.

New Times What is your favorite part of the Strawberry Festival?

Krug You know, it's just a great experience, that you can wander the fairgrounds, from one end to the other, and check out the unusual arts and crafts and things you don't normally see here. The different entertainment going on, the whole thing is just great fun. I happen to really, really enjoy Shival Experience and Unfinished Business. Julie and the Bad Dogs are fantastic, too. If I didn't work the festival, I would be going to see all of it. ▽

Christy Heron watches the pole dance of the stars. Listen at cheron@newtimesca.com.