

# Students, artists, and community celebrate the arts

By **Jodi Schneider**  
Correspondent

Students and teachers from all three Sisters schools joined forces for the 18th annual My Own Two Hands (MOTH) celebration for the arts.

The weekend of events is produced by Sisters Folk Festival (SFF) and supports the Americana Project and affiliated programs of SFF. The two-day event/fundraiser for the Americana Project and arts programs in the schools kicked off with the MOTH Parade Friday afternoon, featuring student-made art to the theme “We All Belong.”

With bells, chimes, and drumming, the Americana Project students set the parade in motion, making their way down Hood Avenue holding up the MOTH banner. Leading the parade was guest artist and West African drum teacher Dale Largent.

For the preceding three days Largent was in the Sisters schools working with students in an artist residency.

Directly following behind the banner were students of Sisters Elementary School excitedly showing off their colorful hand-crafted drums from coffee cans, hats, and hand puppets. Art instructor Karen Williams coordinated

their projects for this year’s Parade.

Sisters Middle School art teacher Judy Fuentes was on hand to show *The Nugget* how her students made a dragon out of cardboard material and hula hoops for its spine.

“It’s just so much fun for all the kids to have something that’s kind of performance-based. The Parade gets the kids really excited to show off their artwork to the community and family,” Fuentes said.

MOTH funds go to help purchase supplies and materials, teacher trainings, artist residencies, and to provide engaging projects to help kids experience the wonder and beauty, the skills and experience that art and music bring to their lives.

To bring the parade home was the Sisters marching band from Sisters middle and high schools under the direction of Tyler Cranor.

Cranor noted, “Every year we end the parade with the ‘fight’ song, but we like to play the ‘march’ song loud to get people pumped up during the parade.”

He added, “This has always been one of my favorite events because all the student artists throughout the schools get together and see what they’ve all been



PHOTO BY ROB KERR

Students of all ages participated in My Own Two Hands activities, including art projects and a parade.

working on and collaborate. It’s a whole school district collaboration.”

The Americana Project helps to connect young people to self-expression through the visual and performing arts, guitar-playing, songwriting, recording and performing.

The parade was followed by an art stroll throughout the town. Art and music lovers strolled throughout the town to the various art galleries and viewed some of the art pieces that were donated by various artists for Saturday’s fundraising auction. Along the way they got to listen to some great local music.

In Sisters Gallery and Frame Shop, hosted by Helen and Dennis Schmidling, who are a part of the Sisters Arts Association, Sisters Jazz Combo pumped out contemporary jazz beats as folks browsed through fine art.

At 6:30 folks headed over to The Belfry for the free concert with Las Cafeteras, a Chicano band from East Los Angeles.

This year as an added highlight the all-new Sisters Kids Choir, “Outlaw Singers,”

were invited to sing as a part of the My Own Two Hands weekend of fundraising for SFF.

Nearly 40 third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students performed as the opening act at The Belfry, directed by Sisters Elementary School music teacher Sarah Miller.

“The parade gets the kids really excited to show off their artwork to the community and family.”  
— Judy Fuentes

The audience got a preview of two songs from a spring concert that the Kids Choir will be performing at the end of May when they will be joining Sisters High Desert Chorale under the direction of Connie Gunterman.

Miller explained to the audience, “Our first song, ‘Moment of Truth,’ is a song from the animated movie

‘Small Foot’ and then they will sing ‘Take on the World’ from the show ‘Girl Meets World.’ We are performing in a concert with High Desert Chorale singing songs from TV and movies and are doing a couple of those tunes tonight.”

SFF Creative Director Brad Tisdell said, “It’s been amazing being invested in the kids in our community, and for the last 19 years SFF has been partnering with Sisters Schools to bring in the Americana Project primarily with high school students. Then the last 14 years SFF has been working with the middle school and now for the last five years we’ve been able to work with kindergarten through 8th grade programming through a grant specifically for music and arts education.”

Friday’s events were followed on Saturday with the My Own Two Hands Art Party & Auction at Ponderosa Forge. Patrons stepped up to purchase the art, donated by local artists, raising tens of thousands of dollars for the festival’s work in Sisters. (See related story, page 1.)



PHOTO BY JODI SCHNEIDER

Sisters band students played during the art stroll.

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