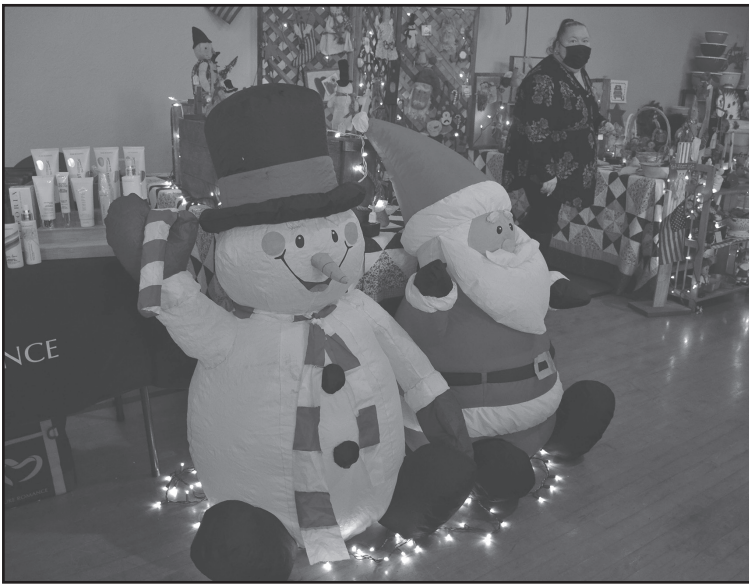




BAZAAR *from A1*

event.

The Palumbos have a simple yet effective outlook underscoring their events:

“Our customer is the vendor and the people that walk through the door are the customers of our vendor,” said Joe. “Ultimately, everything that we do is based on having [vendors] get face to face with their customer and let them do the rest — and make the experience of the person that walks through the door as enjoyable as possible.”

Patrons were also given a chance to win prizes — but with an interactive catch.

In Joe’s past experience organizing larger events, he picked up on a strategy which he found could increase interactions between customers and vendors.

Visitors to the bazaar were given a “passport” which could be filled with stamps from each of the bazaar’s 36 vendors. Those with a fully stamped passport were entered into a raffle to win gift baskets or a teapot.

Giving another little edge to local businesses, the Pa-

lumbos typically arrange to meet winners at a location like Grocery Outlet.

“So again, it’s another community-based kind of thing, using the centralized area of the parking lot where those stores are,” said Joe. “So if someone gets the drop-off, they’re back in a place where there’s business and everybody wins.”

The Holiday Bazaar wasn’t the Palumbos’ first show, though. As Elks members, the couple started organizing events for vendors this March at the Elks Lodge, putting together gatherings based on holiday or seasonal themes.

The events stemmed from a noticeable need among sellers in the area.

Sandy has been selling Tupperware for 13 years and, before moving to Cottage Grove in 2017, had participated in many bazaar events as a vendor. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, she began reaching out through social media to sell her stored-up product.

After receiving a positive response, she realized there was a need in the community not just for herself, but other vendors to find a space where they could put

their wares on display. The Elks Lodge made the perfect fit for a venue and the variety bazaars soon became popular enough hold every month.

While the organizers don’t turn vendors away, they do try to play on the variety and uniqueness of their shows.

“One thing we do make sure we do is we try to never have a duplicate vendor,” said Joe.

The Armory also increased the capacity of the bazaar, allowing for a wider selection of sellers.

Joe added that the organizers took great care in making sure people could feel safe by spacing out vendors and using arrows to direct a flow of traffic through Armory.

“In any given area, there was more space for somebody to be at that particular vendor and spend a little bit of time with them and not have people on top of each other,” he said.

Joe said seeing his cus-

tomers’ satisfaction and enthusiasm has been a continuing motivator, noting a moment he had with the owner of bazaar vendor Dot Dot Smile.

“She couldn’t help but just come to me and say, ‘This is the greatest show I’ve had times two.’ It’s the best thing she’s ever done since she started selling out outside,” he said.

The variety bazaar events are typically held on the second Saturday and Sunday of the month, the next event planned for February.

Though the couple plan on continuing to hold bazaars regularly with the Elks, they hope to return to the Armory for larger holidays.

“If the opportunity poses itself, we’ll probably do it again,” said Joe.

To get updates on upcoming bazaars, follow or join the Facebook group titled “Cottage Grove Events – Variety Bazaar” online.



DAMIEN SHERWOOD/COTTAGE GROVE SENTINEL

The Holiday Bazaar hosted a wide assortment of products and handmade items from local sellers in the Cottage Grove Armory.

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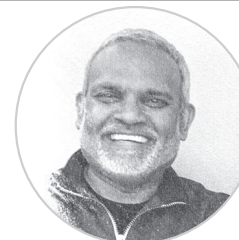
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