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Posted on Mon, Jun. 26, 2006

## CELEBRATING THE FAMILY

Salinas event draws 18,000 to Sports Complex

By ANDRE BRISCOE

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A day of music and dance that was once a prelude to the California Rodeo Salinas drew a big crowd to the Salinas Sports Complex on Sunday.

Mothers and fathers carrying children made their way across North Main Street to the complex as early as 10 a.m. to join in the 12th annual Dia de la Familia celebration.

Organizers of the free event estimated that by the time the celebration ended at 6 p.m. more than 18,000 people had enjoyed a day featuring authentic Mexican food and music.

The event, hosted by KLOK Radio Tricolor, brought some of the most renowned performers of Latino Norteno music. Event organizer Tony Valencia, director of marketing and special events at KLOK, said the celebration was a way for families to come together and enjoy the best of Mexican food and dance.

"This is a family-oriented event," said Valencia. "It's a day for the family to enjoy."

Dia de la Familia began as a kick-off for the California Rodeo Salinas, Valencia said.

Sunday was the first time Remy Cacas of Salinas had attended the event. She and her family enjoyed the atmosphere

"So far we have just enjoyed walking around and listening to the music," she said.

Among the food to be found was carne asada and pollo tacos sopes and roasted corn. Another hot seller were cups filled with sliced watermelon and cantaloupe, sprinkled with chile powder.

Patricia Vazquez, who owns Esperanza Mercado y Carnicera, has sold food at the event for several years and said business had been steady, but money was not the only reason she vends at Dia de la Familia yearly.

"I think it's a nice event," said Vazquez. "We do it more to be a part of the community, not for the profit."

While vendors did brisk business, food wasn't the only attraction. Rodel Umagat brought his son Brandon, 10, and daughter Lauren, 8, to the festival to expose them to a taste of Mexico.

"I wanted to expose the kids to a different culture," he said. "Salinas has a large Hispanic community, and it is a way for them to get to know a little more about that culture."

Umagat had just left Juanita's Jumping House, a favorite attraction featuring inflatable houses where kids can jump and play.

"It's just a place for kids to have fun while their parents enjoy some of the other activities," said Juanita Aguas-Martinez, owner of Juanita's Jumping House.

Tickets for the event were distributed through KLOK-FM, La Tricolor, and KSMS-TV Univision.

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