

Valley Fair family friendly

King City fairgrounds home to a variety of activities

By **JANICE AUSTIN**
For South County Life

Two new barn-shaped buildings at the Salinas Valley Fairgrounds are welcoming visitors to the popular site beside Highway 101 in King City.

The pair of new indoor arenas are the site of equestrian events and activities, ranging from high school rodeos to barrel races to bull riding.

While the fairgrounds host events such as those year-round, May will see the town's biggest event — the annual Salinas Valley Fair. This year's fair comes to life May 17 to 20.

"Our theme this year is 'Come Jam with us in Steinbeck Country,'" said Fair Manager T.J. Thomas. "We will have a great deal of fun, free events for families and couples to enjoy an authentic county fair."

The Salinas Valley Fair started in King City in 1941.

"There were a couple of years during World War II when they didn't have any fairs," Thomas said. "It was pretty common throughout California that fairs were put on hold during World War II, but other than that, we've had the fair here in King City every year."

The facilities have become a hub for south county community events and activities, reflecting the tradition, quality, teamwork and growth of the area.

"We've grown to be one of the larger junior livestock shows and junior livestock auctions," said Thomas.

A 19-member volunteer board oversees the activities, stewardship and vision of the Fairgrounds.

These days, they include plenty of entertainment.

Each Sunday, the fairgrounds becomes a mecca for shoppers at the weekly flea market.

"I recently moved here from



RICHARD GREEN/SOUTH COUNTY LIFE FILE PHOTO

Erin Krieg of Salinas FFA hugs her hog, 'Skeeter,' a 260-pound Hampshire, in May 2006 during the Salinas Valley Fair in King City. This year's fair is May 17-20.

DETAILS

The Salinas Valley Fairgrounds are at 625 Division St., King City. Information: 385-3243; www.salinasvalleyfair.com.

Sacramento," said Thomas, who became the fair manager on Feb. 1. "The community here is extraordinary in how friendly they are. Everybody works hard and plays hard. It's a great place to come hold an event or join the community in celebrating agriculture and the other festivities that we hold here. It's a fun place to visit and it's safe here, too."

"We've also been hosting monthly Hispanic concerts," Thomas said. "We usually have 1,000 to 2,500 people in attendance."

The new West Building brings 52,000 square feet of covered flat exhibit space with a concrete floor to the fairgrounds.

The Salinas Valley Fairground's Rava Arena offers 60,000 square feet of covered floor space suited to equestrian events and other activities best held on dirt floor accommodations.



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SOUTH COUNTY LIFE FILE PHOTO

Delaney Carroll, 4, of Lockwood, enjoys a soft chocolate ice cream cone at the 2006 Salinas Valley Fair in King City.

The fairgrounds are also available for wedding receptions, fundraisers and private parties.

"We have three buildings

with full kitchens," Thomas said.

The Orradre Building sports 12,000 square feet with assembly seating for 1,676 and dining capacity for 700. Built in 1984, the Orradre Building has both kitchen and bathroom facilities as well as a portable stage.

At 12,000 square feet, the Expo Building also has a dining capacity of 700 and assembly seating for 1,850. Constructed in 1954 with a full kitchen, hardwood floors and portable stage, this building is used for gymnasium events such as volleyball and basketball games, school dances, Latino concerts, birthdays, quinceañeras, fundraisers and assemblies.

Great for small meetings and small group barbecues, the Cafeteria Building is equipped with a kitchen facility and offers a classroom atmosphere.

The Grandstands have seating for 1,350.

The Rodeo Arena, used for rough stock and barrel racing, is 185 feet by 330 feet on four acres.

The parking lot at the fairgrounds will hold 240 cars.