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Persian festival brings overflow crowds to Wilder Art & Garden Center

By Sora O'Doherty



Photographer Golnaz Shahmirzadi took portraits of people at the Norouz Persian New Year Festival on Sunday, Mar. 10. The whimsical portraits featured the various symbols that are commonly used as part of the Norouz Table in celebration of spring. Photo Sora O'Doherty

screened cars, and prevented festival-goers from venturing up Wilder Road into the Wilder development. Many vehicles were parked in places inside the parking lot but not designated for parking.

□ Bineshpour said that she didn't think that the turnout would be so large, but she was delighted by the success of the event, which was one year in the planning. She hopes the event will be at Wilder again next year, although she recognized that a larger venue might be required.

□ From 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. festival goers were able to enjoy Persian food and sweets and live music on a mild spring afternoon. There were crafts for the children, and inside the building numerous stalls offered apparel, jewelry and accessories, pottery, handbags and shoes, among other things for sale.

In the words of organizer Farigol Bineshpour, "When mothers get together, magic happens." Three generations of her family joined Minoo Akbarian and other organizers of the first annual Norouz Bazaar and Spring Equinox celebration at the Art & Garden Center at Wilder on Sunday, March 10.

□ The event drew people of Persian ancestry, including those born in Iran, from all over the Bay Area and beyond. Visitors came from as far away as Sacramento, San Francisco, Oakland, and Pleasanton, as well as many other places.

□ Norouz (Nowruz) is a celebration of the new year, and on the Persian calendar the new year is 1403. Next to the stage, large numbers indicating the year were flanked by flowers, as visitors took the opportunity to have their photographs taken. Inside, a professional photographer took portraits with symbols of Norouz and Spring.

□ The parking lot was filled to capacity, and more, as some 1500 people attended the free event.

Nevertheless, the crowd was good natured, waiting patiently in line for barbecue or ice cream, and browsing the many booths of artisan offerings. Traffic control

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[back](#)

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