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## Celebration of horses a huge hit

**Equestrian Center holds four-day show featuring rare breeds of Spanish horses.**

By Tracey Laity

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BURBANK -- Thousands of people, many wearing their best 10-gallon hats and cowboy boots, moseyed on down to the Los Angeles Equestrian Center Saturday night to enjoy the color and spectacle of the Fiesta of the Spanish Horse Extravaganza.

The evening's entertainment was the highlight of more than three days of horse show competition at the center, designed to showcase the cultural legacy of Spanish horse breeds in America, event coordinator Joanne Asman said.

"The Spanish horse has heart and soul," Asman said. "It has a temperament that other breeds don't have. It just loves to show and it loves performing in front of people."

All the money raised from the extravaganza goes to the American Cancer Society and other cancer research groups, she said. In its eight-year history, the extravaganza, which has sold-out out for the past two years, has managed to raise a total of \$400,000, Asman said.

"The wonderful thing about this show is that 80% of ticket sales go to people who have come for the past eight years," she said. "The fact that they keep coming just shows they're having a good time, and that's the biggest compliment I could ever hope to get."

Many audience members and performers come from out of state, from as far as Arizona and Colorado, but they also come from out of the country -- from Spain and Portugal -- to take part in the show, Asman said.

Performers from afar included the Ballet Folkorico Mexico Azteca, young girls and boys in traditional Mexican dress dancing to traditional Mexican music; the Broken Horn Ropers, who demonstrated their limber skill with the lasso; and the Rainbow Riders Drill Team, whose complicated formations and quick maneuvers sent mud flying from the arena floor.

One rider demonstrated how to ride a horse at a brisk pace without spilling a drop from a glass of Champagne held in one hand; another dazzled the audience by riding his horse in full medieval armor. But even he was almost outshone by a group who donned glittering masks and capes for an equestrian performance of Phantom of the Opera.

Sarah Payan and Monica Lee, both of Burbank, enjoyed the entertainment from the sidelines.

"I am a fan of horses, but I am not a big horse person," Payan said. "However, I am really enjoying all the color, the fanfare, the horsie hoopla tonight. It's been great fun so far."

Lee, who used to ride horses as a child, had never attended the extravaganza before but said she would definitely make the time to come again next year.

"I'm having a wonderful time," Lee said. "It's wonderful to see all the horses in action, they're all such beautiful horses and the best thing is that it is all for a good cause."

Unlike Payan and Lee, Buddy Jackson, also from Burbank, was not a newcomer to the extravaganza. He was there specifically to see the Rainbow Riders Drill Team.

"I've been coming here for many years," Jackson said. "I've had horses and ridden horses and I believe that this is basically the best show the center puts on for the year."

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