

Fallbrook Senior Center marks 50th with meals, magic, music and more



Members of the Fallbrook Ukulele Strummers perform "Surfin' USA" during a parking lot performance.



Magician Jerry Langford performs a light-of-hand trick during his senior center show.

By Tim O'Leary
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My home-away-from-home marked its 50th year in fine fettle last week. There was food, a vintage car show, a magician, music and dancing. And, of course, there was plenty of Pickleball.

The week began with the public unveiling of the Fallbrook Intergenerational Storyteller Project. That effort combines the experiences of local seniors and the technical expertise of area high school students to create mini-documentaries that will be posted online.

About 35 people munched snacks, watched the three initial offerings and heard about the effort that will further unfold June 1 and well into the future.

The most popular event of the

week-long celebration appeared to be a mariachi concert and a Mexican food lunch at the Fallbrook Community Center. I ate like a pig and danced like a fool. About 102 people packed the place.

Next up was magician Jerry Langford, whose resume was as intriguing as his show. The Lake Forest resident has worked as a radio announcer and a movie reviewer. He has driven demolition derby cars and won awards for his sand castle creations. He has performed his magic show at schools, on cruise ships and countless other locations.

About 40 people caught Langford's act, which relied heavily on optical illusions and slight-of-hand tricks.

Performer Barry Allen Cohen focused on music of the '50s and '60s. Myself and a couple of other

brave souls wore vintage clothes and kicked up our heels. That lunch show attracted about 80 guests who dined on barbecue ribs, cupcakes and other delights.

The events featured a fair share of looking back, but some of the organizers peered into the future. I have been blessed to have one foot in both worlds.

The nonprofit club is located at 399 Heald Lane in Fallbrook. It serves a 110.5-square-mile area that takes in Fallbrook, Rainbow, Bonsall and Deluz. The club's approximately 640 members each pay \$15 a year to belong. That fee, which has not increased in at least 10 years, doesn't even cover the club's electric bill.

The nonprofit club, which was established in 1974, offers activities, classes, games and other services. Its thrift shop, which opened in the 1980s, is the club's chief source of operating funds.

Nearly 25% of the area's approximately 50,000 residents is comprised of adults age 65 or older, according to SANDAG, a regional planning group. Between 2020 and 2050, the population of Fallbrook-area adults age 75-79 will increase by more than 41%, ages 80-84 by 98% and 85 and older by nearly 150%.

"Has anybody heard the term 'silver tsunami'?" Senior center board member Mark J. Weaver asked an audience at one point.

That projected growth has left club leaders wondering how they will serve the region if the scope of their programs and the size of their 4,000-square-foot facility remain the same. The club has struggled with this dilemma since I served on its board more than a decade ago. These days I volunteer at the center when the mood suits me. I am often flabbergasted by the popularity of the place.

The anniversary celebration ended with a display of classic vehicles owned by members of the Fallbrook Vintage Car Club and a simultaneous concert by the Fallbrook Ukulele Strummers.

Scores of visitors and two dogs strolled through the parking lot examining nearly 20 vehicles and listening to the 21 musicians. My favorite car was a 1902 Oldsmobile Model R curved dash runabout that cost \$650 when it was brand new.

The activities struck a chord with the community. Jim Lyle, a 35-year Fallbrook resident, attended most of the luncheons and functions.



Vintage car buffs cluster around a 1902 Oldsmobile during the Fallbrook Senior Center's 50th anniversary celebration.

"They've all been great," he said. "They were a lot of fun."

"I had not seen a magician since I was in fourth grade," said Lyle, 77. "I wanted to be a magician when I grew up. My parents bought me a magic kit and I couldn't figure it out. It takes a lot of skill to be a magician. I also liked talking to the car guys. They have a lot of stories."

I always savor the music. One of the ukulele tunes—"Wagon Wheel" written by Bob Dylan and Ketch Secor—lingered in my mind the rest of the day.

"... So rock me mama like a wagon wheel. Rock me mama any way you feel. Rock me mama like the wind and the rain. Rock me mama like a southbound train..."



Your correspondent does a dance twirl during a mariachi music moment.

Village News / Tim O'Leary photos