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CowParade SLO County Raises a Quarter-Million Dollars for Local Nonprofits

SAN LUIS OBISPO – CowParade San Luis Obispo County, a public art and charity event which took place September 2016-May 2017, raised \$250,653 for more than 40 local nonprofits, making the campaign an enormous success as both a cultural milestone and a public service.

CowParade has been held around the world, typically in large cities, such as Paris, New York and Rome. Local dairy farmer Alan Vander Horst applied for a CowParade in San Luis Obispo County, having seen the original CowParade in Chicago back in 1999.

“My wife, Rebecca, and I were so impressed with CowParade, we wanted others to experience it as well,” said Vander Horst, a Cal Poly graduate and third-generation dairy farmer. “And, of course, we love cattle. While San Luis Obispo County is smaller than most CowParade cities, we knew it would do well here because this great community does so much to support art, and it has such a rich agricultural history.”

CowParade entails artists creating art out of life-sized fiberglass cow statues. Those art pieces are displayed in public for several months before they are auctioned off for charity.

CowParade SLO County featured 101 cows, which were on public display throughout the county for eight months before they were auctioned off at the finale event in May. Several cows were auctioned live at Oyster Ridge at Ancient Peak in Santa Margarita while others were auctioned online.

According to the CowParade corporation, the live auction average in San Luis Obispo County exceeded the two most recent CowParade events in England and Brazil and was on par with averages in Boston, Denver, Houston and Kansas City.

Jesse/Jane, a cow sponsored by Barnett Cox & Associates and created by artist Dennis Bredow, earned the highest bid in San Luis Obispo County at \$45,000, which supported the 40 Prado Homeless Services Center. The auction benefited three main charities – the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, ARTS Obispo and the California Mid-State Fair Heritage Foundation -- but cow sponsors could also choose the charity they wished to benefit.

Several of the cows remain in highly visible public places.

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