

# 9th Annual Stater Bros. Orange Blossom Festival in Riverside

By Jessica Dearborn

Mother Nature was at her best, offering a warm sun and a cooling breeze. It was a perfect, vibrant day to walk around downtown Riverside during the 9th Annual Stater Bros. Orange Blossom Festival. The further I walked away from the parking lot, my senses were filled with the drifting smells of hot dogs, lemonade, BBQ ... and what's that in the distance? A beer garden! I re-focused, shrugged off my thirst and headed into the crowd.

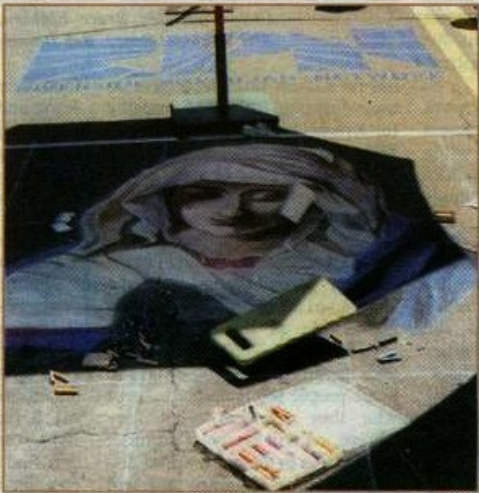
Near the historic Courthouse was the Fiesta Grove. Music boomed from behind the gates, but that wasn't the only thing that drew me in; carne asada tacos persuaded my taste buds. Guilt-free (I stopped counting calories), I finished my tacos, passed the margarita booth (will-power), and found the president-elect of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Dr. Quinto. She was very proud to talk about the programs offered to the community. With their partnership with Orange Blossom, they have created a Hispanic scholarship fund. Healthcare awareness is another program to serve the Hispanic community in Riverside as well as political, economic and educational development.

Moving through the crowd, I almost stepped on a man crouched on the sidewalk working on a chalk drawing of an Italian Renaissance painting. His name



Is it Puss in Boots?

is Greg Adamson, a local banker and an aspiring artist who's beginning to gain recognition. He won an award in acrylic



Amazing "sidewalk" fine art

painting during the Redlands Art Association exhibit at the San Bernardino county museum. His purpose in joining the festival is

to create excitement for art within the community by developing a chalk art festival for other aspiring artists.

I continued to move through the festival and found a stage with a group of musicians called the "Riverland Project." I sat on the grass and listened to their variety and skill. Some played a little folk, others crooned love songs, another added the spice of jazz. Chad Patrick, a teacher in Fontana and the founder of this talented group of musicians explained that this was started to not only foster their careers, also he is "passionate about kids and music, and would like to provide a marriage of the two." His vision is to build a non-profit organization for music education within the schools around California, and eventually nationwide.

After I left the stage, I stumbled upon the Sellers family sitting in the shade, eating their lunch. The Sellers are a local family who has been to the festival every year, this year, though, without their eldest son who is in the Army, and is now heading to Iraq. John and Lisa have taught their children (Shaun, 6 and Michael, 21) to take pride in their community and the diversity of it, sharing an interest in all aspects of society.

Every person I spoke with at the festival shared a common thread of consciousness, responsibility and unity.

In this time of uncertainty, humility and servitude do exist. Riverside is one beat in the whole heart of America.