






2024 Lifestyle Dump

By Ryla Manalang

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Friday Night Munchies is Santa Ana's community grown food market

It's 7 p.m. on a Friday and the sound of sizzling Filipino eggrolls, asada on the grill and cheese bubbling on tortillas fills a vacant lot on Bristol Street across from the Digital Media Center.

As churros crackle in a pool of cooking oil and attendees chatter in line before buying their dinner, the sound is stifled by an exchange of laughter among the neighboring booths and trucks of about 60 vendors. At this weekly pop-up food fest, there is no competition.

"Everybody here embraces you and gives you the same opportunities, it's all love," said Derrick Bobbitt, head of operations at The Situation Catering, a soul food vendor.

Friday Night Munchies is not just a local night market but an incubator for food vendors to integrate into a supportive vending community—a rarity in the cutthroat food industry.

What started as one person wanting to make a change for the safety of vendors, became an outlet for customers to experience a selection of food from the grills, smokers and fryers of food sellers.

The night market was founded in 2019 by Daniel Figueroa and co-organizer Ciara Martinez. Figueroa started as a food vendor on Main and Central Street selling concha ice cream sandwiches, which is still up and running.

Friday Night Munchies aims to start a vending community that offers an unthreatening space to sell food. Crimes against street vendors have been an ongoing issue but experienced a rise in

2021-2023 with an average of 208 attacks per year in LA County according to the Crosstown Newsletter.

“Many of our vendors have stories where they have been jumped for their money and gotten their food run over,” said Martinez.

Main and Central Street was home to Friday Night Munchies and housed 3-5 vendors until it was shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In summer 2021, the market reopened and has continued to fill the streets of Bristol and Edinger with mouthwatering smells and “mmms” as customers take their first bites of smash burgers, loaded potatoes, and crepes dressed with whipped cream, Nutella and berries.

Through the success of social media, the night market has piqued the interest of not only Santa Ana residents but also food market enthusiasts in different counties.

The concept of night markets originated in Asia and has expanded through the Chinese diaspora. California has emphasized the success of night markets like the popular 626 Night Market and Foodieland. These food fests are much different from Friday Night Munchies because they are run by promoters and have become commercialized.

“Compared to Foodieland, the prices are a lot better,” said Jesus Hernandez, a San Diego resident. “I am more about supporting small and culturally oriented businesses, plus this market feels more homey.”

Customers no longer have to break their banks for parking, entrance fees parking and entrance fees to discover new cuisines.

“This event shows true community, it’s a gathering of all cultures,” said Juan Montez, a Santa Ana resident.









The Situation Catering
IT'S A SITUATION

The Situation Catering

Santa Ana Zoo's seasonal butterfly exhibit is an essential summer activity

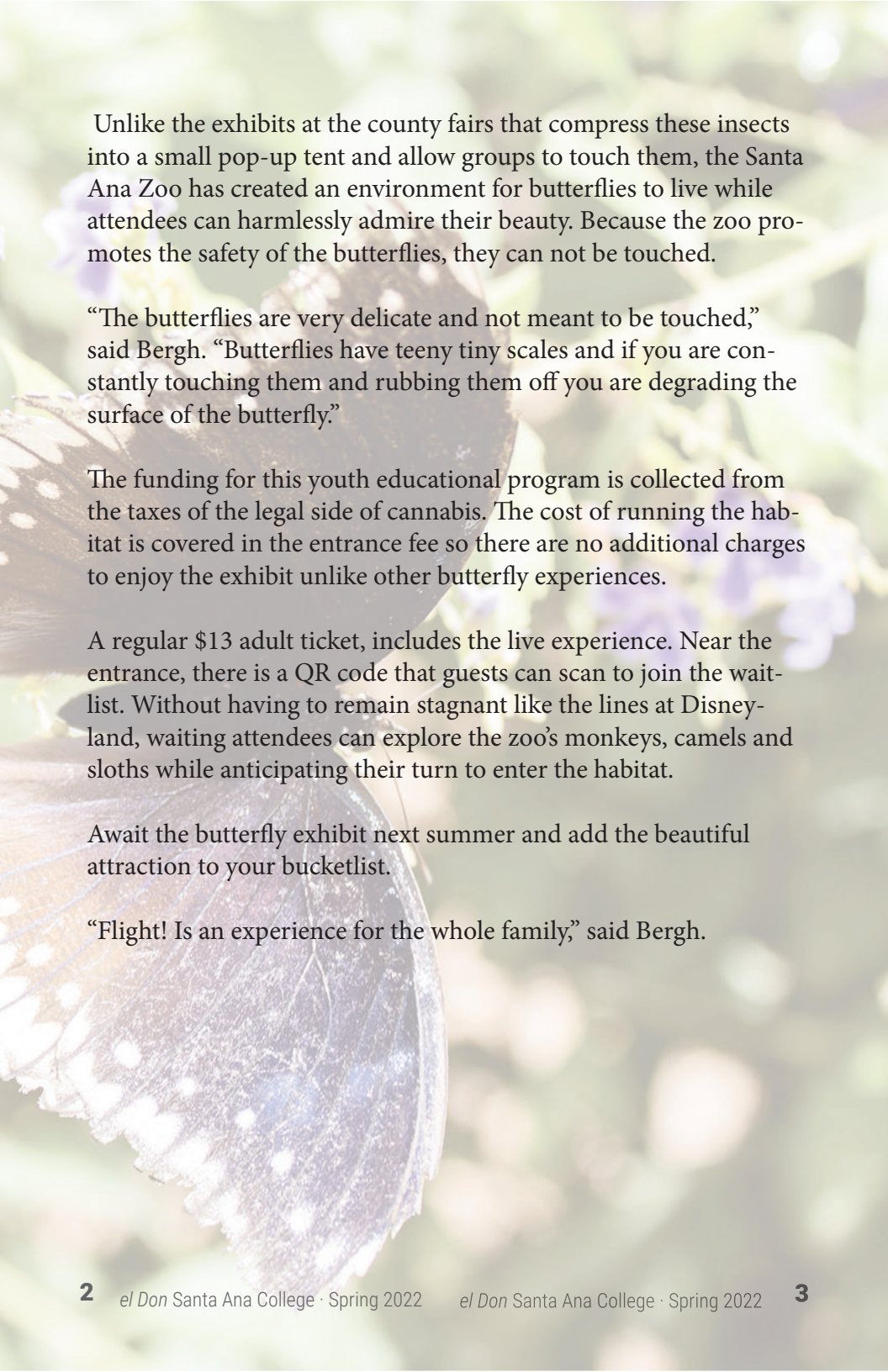
Clusters of colors beyond the rainbow illuminate an enclosed aviary surrounded by lots of greenery. With too many to keep track, a vibrant blue insect flutters out of sight as a new flash of orange occupies the space. As they feed on apples and oranges, rest on leaves and fly around aimlessly, the butterflies mesmerize attendees.

For the third consecutive year, about 300 colorful butterflies belonging to 30 species lived in a custom aviary in the Santa Ana Zoo this summer. “Flight! A Live Butterfly Experience,” is a 2,000-plus-square-foot habitat exclusive to the local zoo.

“I feel like we have a strong connection and impact to the community,” said Lauren Bergh, the zoo’s curator of education. “Santa Ana is dense and diverse which brings people to our habitat and connects them to nature.”

Since the first week of opening in June, the Santa Ana Zoo has obtained weekly shipments of chrysalis containing butterflies from Central, South and North America. They are sourced sustainably from farms. Each one is unpacked by hand and hung on dowels in the emerging room where they are transferred and released into the habitat once they fully surface from the chrysalis.

Depending on the species, their life spans typically last a maximum of four weeks, which means that each butterfly will spend their entire existence in the zoo. When it nears winter, the aviary that the butterflies reside in remains dormant until next year when they are naturally active again.



Unlike the exhibits at the county fairs that compress these insects into a small pop-up tent and allow groups to touch them, the Santa Ana Zoo has created an environment for butterflies to live while attendees can harmlessly admire their beauty. Because the zoo promotes the safety of the butterflies, they can not be touched.

“The butterflies are very delicate and not meant to be touched,” said Bergh. “Butterflies have teeny tiny scales and if you are constantly touching them and rubbing them off you are degrading the surface of the butterfly.”

The funding for this youth educational program is collected from the taxes of the legal side of cannabis. The cost of running the habitat is covered in the entrance fee so there are no additional charges to enjoy the exhibit unlike other butterfly experiences.

A regular \$13 adult ticket, includes the live experience. Near the entrance, there is a QR code that guests can scan to join the waitlist. Without having to remain stagnant like the lines at Disneyland, waiting attendees can explore the zoo’s monkeys, camels and sloths while anticipating their turn to enter the habitat.

Await the butterfly exhibit next summer and add the beautiful attraction to your bucketlist.

“Flight! Is an experience for the whole family,” said Bergh.









Creep it Real OC kicked off the spooky season this past October

About 3,000 horror fans celebrated their favorite time of year at the Heritage Museum of OC this weekend.

Attendees dressed up as Wednesday Addams, bought *Scream* shirts, munched on skeleton-themed esqutes, posed on a replica of the *Stranger Things* couch, and met the voice actors from *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.

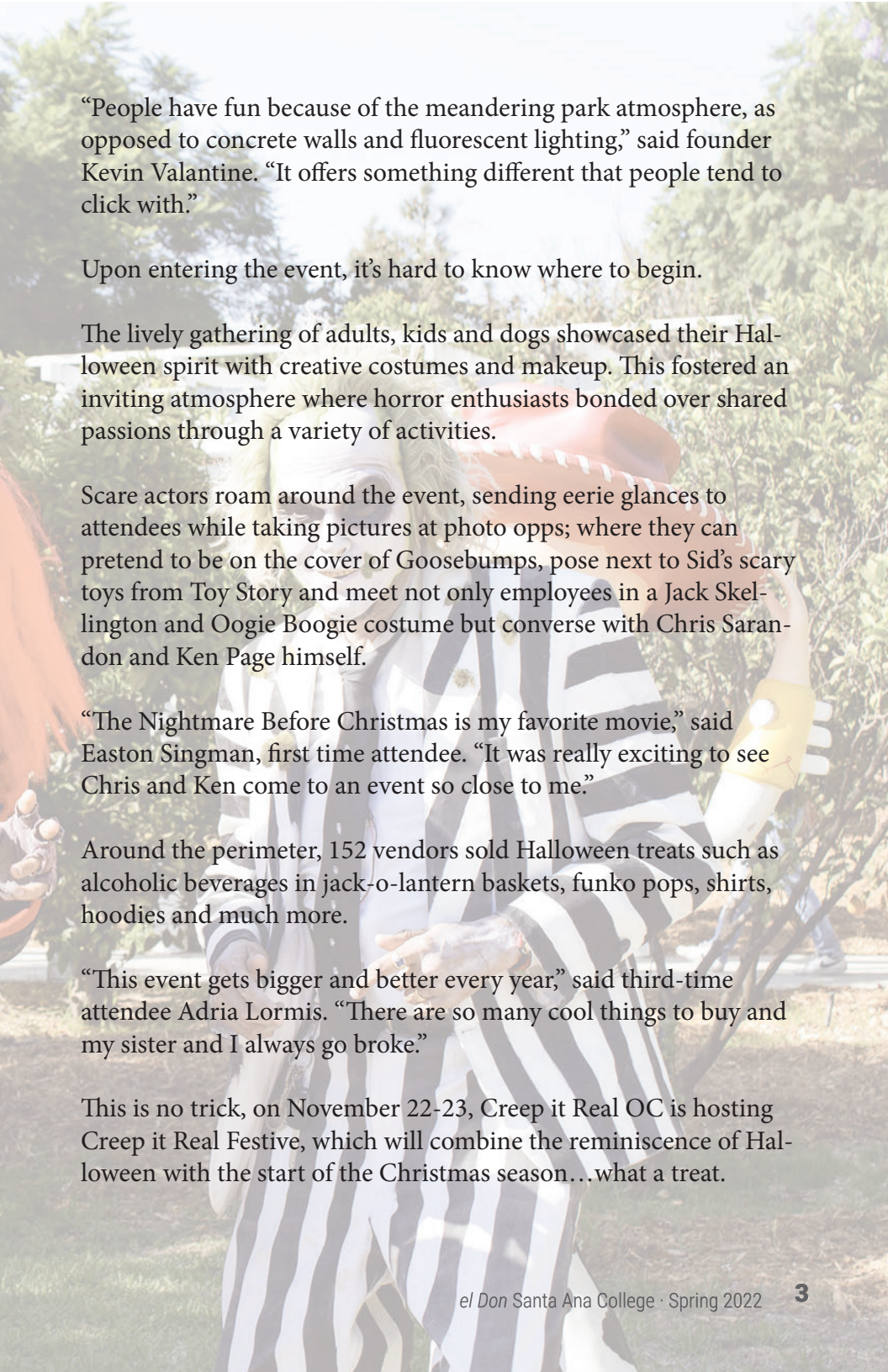
For the fifth year, people dressed as Dracula, Beetlejuice, *Terrifier* and other frightening characters came together on Sept. 14-15 to kick off the spooky season at Creep it Real OC.

“Most of the events I come to are in convention centers, but this has a feel of a fair, which is wonderful,” said Chris Sarandon, who voiced Jack Skellington in *The Nightmare Before Christmas* and was on site for the day charging \$40 for fan photos. “It is looser, free-willing and fun-loving.”

During the season, there are a variety of events for Halloween enthusiasts to get into the spirit, such as horror nights with scare actors, pop-up markets, costume parties, and comic conventions.

But Creep it Real does all of this and more.

The festival-like pop up combines all the fun into one event, where attendees can dress in their costumes and shop for new Halloween gear while being in the fresh air.



“People have fun because of the meandering park atmosphere, as opposed to concrete walls and fluorescent lighting,” said founder Kevin Valentine. “It offers something different that people tend to click with.”

Upon entering the event, it’s hard to know where to begin.

The lively gathering of adults, kids and dogs showcased their Halloween spirit with creative costumes and makeup. This fostered an inviting atmosphere where horror enthusiasts bonded over shared passions through a variety of activities.

Scare actors roam around the event, sending eerie glances to attendees while taking pictures at photo opps; where they can pretend to be on the cover of Goosebumps, pose next to Sid’s scary toys from Toy Story and meet not only employees in a Jack Skellington and Oogie Boogie costume but converse with Chris Sarandon and Ken Page himself.

“The Nightmare Before Christmas is my favorite movie,” said Easton Singman, first time attendee. “It was really exciting to see Chris and Ken come to an event so close to me.”

Around the perimeter, 152 vendors sold Halloween treats such as alcoholic beverages in jack-o-lantern baskets, funkopops, shirts, hoodies and much more.

“This event gets bigger and better every year,” said third-time attendee Adria Lormis. “There are so many cool things to buy and my sister and I always go broke.”

This is no trick, on November 22-23, Creep it Real OC is hosting Creep it Real Festive, which will combine the reminiscence of Halloween with the start of the Christmas season...what a treat.







Bad
Witch

Good
Witch



