



**EN GARDE** Kiaran Loeffke and Trysten Loeffke face off during Interfaith Community Services' Big Thank You event on April 24. Photo by Jason Land

## Interfaith goes medieval to thank volunteers

By Jason Land

**SAN MARCOS** — On April 24, out on a field sandwiched between Mission Hills High School and Mission Hills Church, Interfaith Community Services hosted its Big Thank You, an event to thank supporters of the organization. The celebration wasn't just a barbecue on a patch of grass — it had a medieval theme which resonated

well with the 700 attendees.

Interfaith was founded in 1979 to help low-income, homeless and other underserved populations. Its programs address issues such as basic needs, housing, counseling, employment services and drug and alcohol rehabilitation.

It was a summer-like day, and volunteers wandered between tents with activities like a cake-

walk, giant checkers, pony rides and a "lance" throw. Children ran around with brightly painted faces depicting knights or princesses, or a decorated crown on their head. Some even climbed up inflatable castle shaped jumpers, while parents and members munched on catered food.

Volunteers dressed the part, decked out in medieval style. Julio Miranda, who was outfitted as Robin of Loxley, complete with a wooden staff, normally teaches martial arts and made himself available for demonstrations on the field.

One of the volunteers was Gabriela Espinosas, a case manager for the Oceanside office of Interfaith. "We provide emergency food, personal hygiene items and prescription assistance Monday through Friday," Espinosas said of the organization. "We were all called in and we all gave a hand working the crafts or food tents and stuff."

Some of the volunteers were even recipients of the care the Interfaith organization provides. Brad Washko is a resident at



**BO KNOWS** Julio Miranda, a martial arts instructor, dressed up as Robin of Loxley and entertained kids using his skills with a bo staff. Photo by Jason Land



**HORSIN' AROUND** Stephanie Hernandez rides a pony at the Faire's Knight's Pony Rides and Li'l Horse Adventures. Photo by Jason Land

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Interfaith and was dressed as a peasant, though he had a live snake hung around his neck. "We were planning on going to the Renaissance fair in Escondido, so I called up my son and said, 'Let's go a day early.'" Washko said. "We go as dragon slayers, so we take the snakes as baby dragons even though they're old."

At the climax of the event, on the patio of the Mission Hills Church, The Valley Center Sword Fighters gave a performance based on the exploits of "The Three Musketeers" and a scene from "Romeo and Juliet." Elementary school students put on the show, directed by their teacher Richard Rivera. In a scene from "The Three Musketeers," swordfighting student Kiaran Loeffke defended her sister Keelin from the cardinal's guards Perry Curtiss and Trysten Loeffke.

As the musketeer prevails in the story, the volunteers of Interfaith continue to fight to help those in the community that society often forgets.

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