



MERCADO DAYS

Festival promises to be 'caliente'

By David Ball

The Mercado Days Festival is now in its fifth year and Chairperson Sabrina Vrooman said they have been learning and building upon prior festivals. She believes this year's festival could be a really good one.



The Mercado Days groups this year include La Banda Blanca who made their debut at the New Orleans Jazz Fest 2000 including the House of Blues. La Pura Sabrosura De Olivares, originally from Mexico but now out of Houston, have been a group since the 1970s.

Mariachi Sol De America was formed in 1981 and became one of the main traditional Mexican acts in the U.S. per-

forming mariachi and later combining contemporary rhythms. Cumbia Pa Saborear La Sonora Kinamita was originally founded in Columbia in 1959. The group combines male and female vocalists, trumpeters and trombonists, percussionists on timbales and cowbell, and occasionally other instruments like accordion or keyboard.

Los Tres Reyes began 35 years ago and were essential in the

development of the Golden Age of Spanish romance music throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

The event is sponsored by the Southeast Texas Hispanic Cultural and Educational Center. It will run from Friday, April 18 to Saturday, April 19. "We have a great group of people," Vrooman said.

In addition to the bands, Vrooman said there will be the Mexican Heritage Folkloric

Dancers, a pinata party, a queens pageant, arts and crafts, food, carnival rides, a car show and a golf tournament with over 20 teams competing.

"We'll have papier mache puppets this year. We'll have a specific booth recognizing our veterans and we'll ask people with family serving or have served in the military to bring their picture. We'll have a salsa contest, too," she said.

"IT'S REALLY GROWING. PEOPLE ARE EXCITED AND BEEN ASKING WHEN IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN. IT'S GOOD FOR PORT ARTHUR," VROOMAN SAID. SHE ADDED SOME OF THE MUSICAL GROUPS LINED UP THIS YEAR ARE VERY POPULAR. "I RECEIVED CALLS ALL THE WAY FROM GALVESTON. LAST YEAR, WE HAD VISITORS FROM HOUSTON, LOUISIANA AND OKLAHOMA FOR THE ENTERTAINMENT. FOR JUST \$10 YOU CAN LISTEN TO ALL THE GROUPS."

