

Giant puppets are coming to Mercado Days

The Southeast Texas Hispanic Cultural & Educational Center is conducting giant puppet workshops that involve area schools, organizations and individuals.

The giant puppets, "higantes," are frequently used in parades in Central and South America. Although, some cities in the United States feature gigantes in their parades, the club feels that their focus on cultural diversity will be unique.

Andy Ledesma, Texas Artist Museum director, leads the workshops every Thursday night at 6:15 p.m. at the Texas Artists Museum, 3501 Cultural Drive. Ledesma trained under Beth Peterson, one of the top puppet artists in the country, and he is very excited about sharing his knowledge with local citizens.

The training Ledesma gives to club members qualifies them to help other groups that wish to make their own puppets. Any student in grade 5 through 12 can join in the project.

Parents or students can call Sandy Riley at 409-983-3951 for more information or just attend one of the workshops.

"Making a puppet is going to be fun. Seeing the community



Sandy Riley/Special to Hispanic Triangle News

Andy Ledesma shows some of the technique used to create giant puppets known as 'higantes.'

work together to see this project through fruition is going to be awesome," Riley said.

The Hispanic club will announce details about a contest and pageant in March. The events are open to anyone living in Southeast Texas. Prizes will be awarded at the 5th Annual Mercado Days Festival. The club is asking participating groups to construct puppets portraying the many cultures in our area.

Maria Block is chairing the contest and pageant committee. She can be reached at 365-8772 or 548-0178. During the next

few months, the club will be collecting fabric, cardboard, cornstarch, paint and newspapers. They are also in need of a workspace where they can store materials and hold workshops. Cash donations are greatly appreciated.

Anyone who would like to help or who thinks their organization, school or classroom would like to become involved, can call Riley at 409-983-3951 or email her at sandyr@gt.rr.com. She also invites you to visit www.sethceec.org for more information.

Free telephones available to hearing impaired

Residents of Jefferson and surrounding counties can now apply for a free amplified captioned telephone. The phone is available for individuals with hearing loss.

To qualify for a free phone voucher, the applicants must 1) Be a Texas Resident age 5 and up

2) Be hearing-impaired, and 3) Be able to actively use a telephone.

The captioned phone plugs in just like a regular phone.

Application requests are available in the lobby of Com-Tech Computer Repair and Service located at 1914 Suite B (Snell Shopping Center

across from St. Mary's Hospital) in Port Arthur, Texas.

A representative is available to assist walk-ins on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2 p.m.-6p.m. To arrange for a representative to speak for a group about this free public service or to arrange a private appointment, please call 409-728-6187 or email clover.bolden@sprint.com.

Adult applicants and guardians guardians must bring one copy of a valid Texas ID (driver's license, or utility bill or voter registration card) to attach to the application.

Free income tax preparation, help available

AARP Tax-Aide will offer free, volunteer-run tax preparation and counseling service from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Mondays at the Port Arthur Public Library, 4615 Ninth Ave.

Spanish language assistance is available.

Tax-Aide sites offer elec-

tronic filing of tax returns, as a free service. Taxpayers should bring their W-2, 1099, Social Security income, pension income, Social Security cards, and a copy of last year's tax statement.

Tax-Aide gives special attention to those age 60 and older but serves all taxpayers.



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