

3rd Annual Mad Skills Talent Show

Written by Story and photos by Dee Velasco For the Sun
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Talented LOCALS show off their 'mad skills' for prizes!

The Rio West Mall recently held its 3rd Annual Mad Skills Talent Show July 14.

This free event was open for all ages, to show off a talent or two. The event was held center court from 5 pm - 8 pm, and 11 contestants gathered ready to battle in hopes of winning first, second, and third place, and winners were awarded \$100, \$75 and \$50 respectively.

A plethora of talented contestants were on hand showcasing talent, such as guitar playing, singing, comedy sketches, and Hip-Hop dancing.

Judging was based on creativity, preparedness, familiarities with the songs contestants sang/played, stage presence, and overall performance/quality of the talent.

Rio West General Manager Anita Artalejo said that this was one way to give back to the community while having fun for the whole family. Keeping business here locally only makes sense and having events like this only amplifies the meaning of keeping the community strong and vibrant, while helping local businesses.

"It's a part of us giving back to the community, and being involved with the Community. We want to offer our community family fun events," she said.

Emceeding the event, Leasing/Marketing Manager Hannah Madrid, said it was fun and scary being on stage but worthwhile. Madrid hopes events like this will draw locals to shop and continue shopping at the mall. With the current stores at the mall, Madrid wants the public to visit not only the stores but to visit future stores coming soon like Hobby Lobby.

"Being emcee was a little terrifying actually ... but other than that it's pretty good," Madrid said.

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"I'm looking to see all sorts of talent here in Gallup, and we want everyone to come see what the mall has to offer."

Even those who work in the mall were a part of the event such as Orange Julius Margina Elwood. Elwood volunteered because she thought it would be fun and was also hoping to get the word out about her store.

"I really like to put our store out there and so I want more people to come to our store, while being a part of this event and having fun at the same time," she said

Another mall worker, Tiana Miller, an administrative assistant, who works with Madrid, said this type of event is good for the mall and it's good to get involved with the community.

"I wanted to help out and be a part of this, and I hope to see a lot of talent," she said.

Stay-at-home mom, Deedra Haswood, who was asked by Artalejo to be a judge, thought it would be fun to do it.

"I've been friends with Anita for a long time and when she asked if I wanted to volunteer to do this ... I couldn't say no, and I thought it would be very enjoyable," she said.

All three judges were given sheets to critique the contestants, and watched the talent before a good size crowd on a Friday evening, while shoppers passed by and checked out the show. Each contestant took the stage with a limited time, and hopefully wowed the crowd like Eli Phillips.

Being retired, Eli Phillips from Gallup showed off his talent with a guitar cover of Elvis Presley's "Love Me Tender", hoping to win first place.

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"I do this to keep my creative self-active, and now that I am retired, to keep my whole self-active," he said.

Contestant, Cody Bahe, also from Gallup, played the guitar while serenading the crowd with his singing. He gave a moving performance. Playing since he was 13, Bahe said he usually plays contemporary acoustic song and hopes to be a musician when he grows up.

"I just like performing it's like a hobby of mine I guess. It's really fun playing guitar and I love singing," Bahe said, "I like playing talent shows and I won one last week at the Arts Crawl which was cool, and I give it all to God."

Jayanna Deary, who is only 12-years-old, took the stage with her dancing. Dancing since the age of 4, Deary is in a competitive dancing team and has performed in Florida, Nevada, and California. She also performed at a Phoenix Suns basketball game.

"I got into dancing by watching other people and I like it, and if I win I'm hoping to help my family out," she said.

Jenna Plummer, who is Deary's mom, came to support her daughter. She jokingly said her daughters talent definitely did not come from her.

"I'm very proud of her," she said. "I work very hard to make sure she does something she enjoys. I don't dance (laughs), so her talent did not come from me that's for sure."

As the last contestant performed, Madrid thanked everyone for coming out and being a huge part of this event. The judges quietly tabulated the scores and everyone awaited the results.

First place went to Francesca Chavez for singing. Second place to Kayla Wauneka for singing. And third place to Mia Carabajal and Orian Dale for a Hip-Hop and piano performance.

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