

## **For Immediate Release – March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009**

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### **Sierra Madre Wistaria Festival Draws Thousands to Sierra Madre**

A crowd estimated well in excess of 10,000 people flocked to Sierra Madre on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, enjoying live entertainment, shopping in the local stores and along the closed downtown streets featuring the wares of more than 150 arts and crafts vendors, and dining at the local eateries and the food booths in Memorial Park.

Nearly 3,800 people made the trek up to the town's famous Wistaria Vine, the 115-year old wonder certified for many years by the Guinness Book of World Records as the world's largest blossoming plant. Nell and Bob Solt and Dan and Dana Dorrance, owners of the two lots on which the massive vine is located, once again generously opened their properties to the thousands who streamed in from all over Southern California and beyond to take in the majesty of the vine, which was in full bloom.

Bill Coburn, chair of the Wistaria Committee for the Sierra Madre Chamber of Commerce which annually puts on the event, congratulated the volunteers and staff that made the event a success. "This is truly a community event. We had more than 150 volunteers that took part (or all) of their day to welcome the visitors. Many of the vine docents are old hands, having volunteered for years, and this year's co-chairs Halcyon Koerber and Lisa Spigai-Perez did a great job of preparing the new docents and making adjustments to streamline things as the day went on and the lines got longer. Mario Lalli from Café 322 booked, scheduled and oversaw the set up for all the stages for the two dozen musical acts. Bus Volunteer co-chairs Sue Levoe and Carol Canterbury were under a lot of pressure as the lines got longer, but they handled it all in stride, as did the bus docents and people working the lines. The volunteers in the ticket booth also did a great job selling tickets and handling the will call window," he added.

"Susan Henderson and her son Fred, with help from Tom Canterbury in the morning, oversaw the food vendors and non-profits and kid activity vendors up at Memorial Park. Thanks are due to volunteer coordinator Rosemary Morabito for recruiting and organizing the volunteers that manned the barricades and the information booths. Last minute sign-ons Ron and David Brandley prevented what could have turned into chaos when early morning drizzle washed away the chalk lines and numbers that marked off the assigned vendor booth spaces. Susan Clifton did a great job as the City liaison and coordinated the Gold Line shuttle, as well. There are so many people that made this event a success. And I can't say enough about the job done by Tiffany Bailey, the Chamber's administrative assistant, who oversaw the selection and coordination of the vendors, administration of the TUP with the City, presale ticket distribution and so much more. She's been working on this event since last year's ended, and has already begun working on next year's. Thank you, to everyone in the community that brought this whole event together."

The Wistaria Vine began as a one-gallon potted vine purchased and planted in 1894. It has grown to the extent that at one point it covered more than an acre of land, and has been estimated to have in excess of 1.5 million blooms when in season. At one point, the house on which it grew was crushed under its weight. The first festival was held in 1918, and through the years, funds raised by the festivals have benefited the war effort, the Red Cross, and local organizations such as the Volunteer Fire Dept., the Woman's Club, and its current steward, the Chamber of Commerce.