

Making music at inaugural ukulele fest

By **CLAUDIA LOPEZ**
Valley Press Staff Writer

LANCASTER — A little bit of Hawaii came to Lancaster on Saturday for the inaugural Antelope Valley Ukulele Festival.

Sponsored by Ohana Ukulele, the event at the Cedar Center offered workshops on how to play the instrument as well as live performances.

The ukulele is “non-judgemental” and it can be played by anyone, ukulele player and singer Cali Rose said.

“I play other instruments but this instrument is not for spectators,” Rose said. “It’s for participants. It invites people to be part of making music, not to just watch it and enjoy it. It invites people to come and actually make music, which is one of my theories of why the renaissance of ukulele, a global renaissance, continues to grow.”

The ukulele, or “uke,” as its admirers call it, is a small, short-necked instrument with four nylon strings that first appeared in Hawaii in the late 1880s, after Portuguese seamen who stopped at the

islands brought small guitar-like instruments with them.

Rose, who teaches workshops for seniors in Los Angeles to learn to play the ukulele, said many in her groups were told as children they didn’t have the talent to sing or play an instrument.

“This has given them a new life, realizing that ‘yes, I can do it,’” Rose said. “We are not in competition; we are making music together. It’s a whole different ball game from other instruments.”

Local ukulele player Michael Lemos, who helped coordinate the Lancaster event with his wife, Nancy, said he feels peace and joy — not just when he plays the ukulele, but when it makes those who listen happy.

“The whole idea is to share ‘aloha’ with the community. That’s our focus,” Michael Lemos said. “We are having some local musicians — our main headliners are from the Los Angeles, San Diego area.”

Nancy Lemos said she was happy to see people come into the festival and listen to the music and even attend the workshops.

“My husband has been going to



INVITING MUSIC

Cali Rose leads a ukulele workshop at Saturdays inaugural Antelope Valley Ukulele Festival held at the Cedar Center in Lancaster. Performances and workshops were conducted for musicians of all levels.

RON SIDDLE
Valley Press

ukulele festivals for a long time and he said, ‘You know, we need one here,’ and he had just started going with it. We found this amazing venue that is so perfect for our purposes for today,” she said.

She added: “We are just spreading ‘aloha.’ We are just asking for donations, we are welcoming any-

body to come in. We are also starting a non-profit where any money that we raise will go to Antelope Valley schools.”

The purpose of starting the non-profit organization, which is called AV Ukes for Schools, is to get music back in schools, Nancy Lemos said.

“We really want to get kids

involved and get music back in schools through the non-profit,” she said.

Festival performers included the High Desert Ukulele Club; Ka Pa Hula O Kawailehua; O’ahu; Area 51.5 Ukulele Club; Jim Duncan; Cali Rose; Fred Thompson and Jason Arimoto.

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