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## Shop, Look and Listen

### ***Broadacres reinvents itself by adding live music, snack bar***

BY LAURA EMERSON

Smells of barbecue, Mexican food and pizza fill the air. Live music floats from the central stage, mixing with the chatter of families who are strolling the grounds. Vendors inside vividly painted sheds sell their wares and the afternoon sun warms your skin.

It's another Sunday at the Broadacres Marketplace & Event Center, and Greg Danz wants you to stay as long as you like.

Danz's father, Tad, owns three swap meets in California. Together, they purchased Broadacres Swap Meet in 2007. Since then, they have invested about \$5 million in renovations that they hope will make the space more profitable. This month they are celebrating the culmination of those renovations, the rebranding of the Broadacres Swap Meet as the Broadacres Marketplace & Event Center.

"I think we're a lot more than a swap meet," Danz said. "I don't really like the word 'swap meet.' It's not this. It's not a place where you can go see bands and shop."

In 2009, the Danz family purchased 2.3 acres directly adjacent to the existing swap-meet space. With the purchase, Broadacres now covers just less than 45 acres.

"It was actually the best thing ever," Danz said.

Since December, business is up 15 percent and the number of vendors is up 10 to 15 percent. Food and beverage sales also are up 20 to 30 percent. On a normal weekend, attendance ranges from 30,000 to 35,000 people. Those numbers don't include children 12 or younger, because they can enter for free. Entrance fees are 50 cents on Friday, \$1 on Saturday and \$1.50 on Sunday.

The purchase let the owners realign vendors' booths so they wouldn't disrupt the natural flow of traffic, build a permanent snack bar structure, add 25 stalls to each of the men's and

Marketplace

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Shoppers on April 24 walk along "Main Street" in the newly reconfigured area of Broadacres Marketplace & Event Center. The space, which had been known as the Broadacres Swap Meet, underwent \$5 million in renovations. Since December business is up 15 percent.



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Shoppers listen to live music April 24 at the new stage at Broadacres Marketplace & Event Center. Bands play three one-hour sets on Saturdays and Sundays at the venue.

women's restrooms and construct a large stage area. Danz also was able to expand the parking lot.

Adding the stage allowed Danz to hire bands to play three one-hour sets on Saturday and Sunday for a cost of \$1,000 to \$3,000. He designed a comfortable backstage green room, complete with a full buffet spread, so artists will want to return.

"We want them to want to play here," Danz said.

When there is no band on stage, he runs sporting events on 10 televisions in the covered area for families to watch while they sit at one of the 100 brightly colored picnic tables eating breakfast or lunch. Danz also invested in heightened security around the entertainment area, because of the large crowds it attracts.

Before the stage opened in December, Danz said people weren't staying for long periods at Broadacres. He found that the average customer was spending about 45 minutes on the property.

"The attendance here is amazing, but the people were just shopping and leaving," he said. "I think that's already changed."

Danz said Sundays draw 15,000 to 20,000 people, Saturdays draw 9,000 to 12,000 people, and Fridays attract 2,500 to 3,500 people.

When Danz bought Broadacres, its customer base was about 95 percent Hispanic. He estimates that number is now about 80 percent, but he would like to attract other nationalities, too. To do so, he has hired non-Hispanic bands to play at the stage area twice each month on Saturdays and is advertising the performances on local radio. This month Van Halen and Metallica tribute bands are scheduled to perform.

Danz employs about 112 people at Broadacres, including Yovana Alonso, who has worked for the shopping center for 15 years. Before Danz and his father bought the property, Alonso was considering leaving her job as a Broadacres reservationist. She said she felt inspired when the Danzes took ownership, though, because they told the employees that there would be room to grow with the company.

Alonso now is an office manager at Broadacres, overseeing four employees.

"I would have left, but I saw the changes happening and thought, 'this could be a good thing,'" Alonso said.

Although the rebranding and stage area opening have affected Broadacres positively, Danz said there are downsides to owning a business like this: There is high turnover in many of the jobs that pay only minimum wage.

Danz keeps the vendor mix at 50 percent permanent and 50 percent temporary so customers always can see something new. Many of the temporary vendors actually are garage sales. In Nevada, it is legal to sell four times per year at a swap meet before you need to apply for a business license.

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#### **VENDORS SAY CHANGES HELP**

With a large remodeling effort complete and marketing campaigns under way, longtime vendors at the Broadacres Marketplace and Event Center have noticed the changes.

Inside her two booths, Imelda Navarrete sells supplies for other swap-meet vendors, international flags and Avon products. Navarrete has run her small business at Broadacres for 19 years.

In the past few months, she has noticed a slew of new people wandering the marketplace. She thinks it's a direct result of the stage's construction. Navarrete also has noticed flags selling since December that previously

didn't move very well, which she guesses is a result of the marketing efforts led by co-owner Greg Danz.

"They've really made a big improvement on the place," Navarrete said.

When she's not selling her wares at the marketplace, Navarrete is minding slot machines. She has been a full-time slot floor attendant for Boyd Gaming Corp. for 20 years.

"Just in case I lose my job, (Broadacres) is something to depend on," Navarrete said. "It pays the utility bills. A lot of families are depending on it to survive."

For six years, Javier Arredondo has sold a wide variety of shoes at Broadacres. Since the entertainment center opened, Arredondo said his business has increased 50 percent.

"The atmosphere is different in general under the new ownership," Arredondo said.

He, like Navarrete, has noticed people of different nationalities coming who previously didn't attend. Arredondo said he has seen more white and Native American people shop at Broadacres these days, as well as an increase in tourists.

Marcia Hill, a seven-year vendor, doesn't agree that all the changes have been positive. She sells a hodgepodge of items from electric oil burners and jewelry to men's wallets and binoculars.

"When (Danz) plays music the aisles are empty," Hill said. "The only one it's helping is him. It's helping his gate count and his food sales."

Hill said her business has neither dropped nor increased since the renovations. But customers have told her it's easier to navigate the marketplace since the remodel.

George Moen, a retailer with 22 years of experience at Broadacres, agrees with Navarrete and Arredondo that the addition of the entertainment venue has been good for his business. He sells small hand tools and said that his booth has benefited from an increase in foot traffic.

"The economy is down and it gives people someplace to go and get a better deal than in a traditional store," Moen said.

The additional parking lot Danz built also has helped sales, Moen said.

"Before they'd pull in, the lot was full, and they'd drive away," he said.

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