

Home show, and Lego contests, March 11-12

Paul Weideman | Posted: Sunday, March 5, 2017 5:00 am

By Paul Weideman

Here comes the 2017 Santa Fe Home Show, a festival of exhibitors showing what they do or what they're selling under the general tagline, "Innovative Solutions for Better Living." The March 11-12 home show at the Santa Fe Community Convention Center is also the occasion for a fabulous Lego-building contest for fairgoers' children.

Kim Shanahan, executive director of the sponsoring Santa Fe Area Home Builders Association, looks forward to the involvement of the Meow Wolf artist collective. "Last year the group was a participant sponsor, so every one of the 160 kids had a free ticket to Meow Wolf's amazing, interactive exhibit, *The House of Eternal Return*. But Meow Wolf was just having its grand opening, so they were pretty busy. This year we hope to recruit Meow Wolf people to be judges for the contest, which is sponsored by Del Norte Credit Union."

There are eight Lego contests: one each for ages 5-8 and for ages 9-12 in the morning and afternoon on both days. The eight top prizes are free pool/skating parties for the winner and her or his friends at the Genoveva Chavez Community Center. "We're loving the idea that we're trying to celebrate creativity and good health among our youth," Shanahan said. He stressed that these are non-thematic Legos — no Super Hero Girls or Minecraft or Batman. The builders' association recently bought 10 more kits, two for extra parts and the others are the third-place prizes. "Second-place winners get \$50 cash — ironically, the kids often like that 2nd-place prize best."

Each contest is 20 kids at a big table in the convention center's lobby working for 30 minutes, then the three judges are asked to interview each one. "The judges don't just walk around and make notes," Shanahan said. "The first year we did this, we thought we'd have a contest every hour — 45 minutes to make something and 15 minutes for judging — but we realized that was not enough time for the judges, because you have 20 kids and every one wants to tell you what he was thinking about. So now we're not rushing the judges; the point is we want the judges to engage the kids and I think the Meow Wolf judges will really enjoy that part of it."

The Lego contest, which the nonprofit SFAHBA promotes in all of the elementary schools, also obviously advertises the annual home show. The contest was begun not only as an activity for the children while their parents peruse the show, but to stimulate attendance by a younger set. "One of the things we recognized a few years ago is that the demographics of people going to the home show was older homeowners with a little discretionary income wanting to do something on their house. But where are the Gen Xers?" Shanahan said. "How do we get these young parents to the show?"



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Lego contests are a big hit at the Santa Fe Home Show

The demographic is telling. “The Gen X group (those born between 1965 and 1980) is just half the size of the baby boomers and Millennials groups. There’s this population trough that’s affecting the market and the demand for new homes, and our membership is down. So this contest was designed to get those young people out.”

The Lego contests are an ongoing positive for the show and the attendees, but another adjunct has fallen by the wayside, at least for 2017. This would have been the fifth year for a design competition for Santa Fe Community College students, but the event has been canceled. “In the past several years we’ve done this, PNM has given us \$5,000, and most of that was for cash prizes for those SFCC students,” Shanahan explained. “But PNM could not afford to sponsor it this time.”

The main show will include more than 65 exhibitors: plumbers, electricians, painters, tile people, roofers, stucco companies. “Actually it’s more a point to think of who we *don’t* have. A lot of home shows are home and garden shows, but we only have one landscaper. We don’t promote wind chimes and garden gnomes like you see at some shows. We’re one of the few homebuilder associations in the state — Las Cruces is another one — that puts on their own show.

Another highlight of the Santa Fe Home Show is the Remodeler Showcase, featuring a contest for remodeling contractors, who have their portfolios on display.

The home show happens from 10 a.m to 5 p.m. on Saturday, March 11; and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 12. Tickets are \$5. The Santa Fe Convention Center is located at 201 West Marcy Street. For more information, call 505-982-1774

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