

Luis Palau Festival Attracts 75,000

On a Father's Day Weekend when meteorologists were telling people to stay inside, more than 75,000 central Californians packed three events at a Luis Palau Festival in Sacramento.

Temperatures were well over 100 degrees on the grounds of Cal Expo Saturday and Sunday, where Palau's free evangelistic outreach was staged. Major Christian artists TobyMac, Skillet, Mandisa, Phil Wickham and Lincoln Brewster performed; the Amazing Wonders Family Experience and play area drew thousands of kids and families; and Action Sports demos showcased some of America's top extreme athletes.

"We were ecstatic with the response from the Sacramento Valley and beyond," said Palau. "We've prayed for an opportunity to come to the state capitol for decades and we were richly blessed."

The bilingual Palau added a Spanish language event on Friday night at Capital Christian Center, one of the area's largest churches and one of more than 470 congregations and businesses supporting the festival. The celebration also represented the culmination of a six-month initiative called The Season of Service (SOS), which brought together the faith community in acts of service.

The SOS campaign had a particular focus on neighborhood and school renovation, health and welfare, hunger, and homelessness, completing more than 200 projects involving an estimated 20,000 volunteers. Many of these projects will continue long-term.

"It was everything we have hoped and prayed for over the last seven years," said Henry Wells, former pastor of Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church and an early leader in efforts to bring

the Palau ministry to Sacramento. "The support grew from a small group of clergy and lay people to a huge campaign that united churches all over the Sacramento valley."

Unity was a recurring theme as churches across denominations and cultures worked together to promote the festival and meet some of the city's critical needs. Hispanic, Russian, Chinese and other ethnic congregations joined in sharing the love of Jesus across the culturally diverse region. Palau's son Andrew, himself an international evangelist, teamed with Prison Fellowship and extreme sports athletes to extend the outreach to inmates at Folsom and Solano prisons.

"You have the church community, you have public entities, you have nonprofits ... all coming together," said Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson of the initiative. "The ministry that happens within the walls of our churches is great, but what happens beyond the walls of the church is where the real ministry takes place."

Throughout the festival week, Palau shared the gospel message in a variety of settings, including luncheons for business and civic leaders, a luncheon for women, and an appearance at the capitol to address state leadership. His messages tied the gospel to the challenges of contemporary culture, including the fragility of life and the important role of fathers.

"So many of today's young people are leading fatherless lives," said Palau. "We wanted them to know that there is love and hope through their heavenly father."