

Ranchita bigfoot stopping traffic, drawing attention to community

By **Connie George**

RANCHITA – Joe Rauh didn't set out to make monsters when he moved to Ranchita five years ago. But neighbors and tourists are glad he did.

After spending most of his time on the road as a management consultant in the software industry, Rauh shares, "I got tired of it. I didn't know my family. So, I said, 'Let's get away somewhere.'"

He moved his family from Poway to the fresh, open spaces of hilltop Ranchita for a radical change of lifestyle. This included becoming a broker for Ranchita Realty, a one-room agency operating out of a cabin in the tiny town's center.

But a declining real estate market left Rauh with increasingly less business and a lot more spare time.

In December 2006 inspiration hit, rooted in both experience building race cars and a longtime fascination with stories of bigfoot and yetis, the fabled manlike beasts rumored to

roam many regions of the world.

With an investment of \$18,000 in materials, Rauh turned an outbuilding at his home into an elaborate workshop in which he constructed two 11-foot models of the mythical giants. Dimensions were elongated versions of Rauh's own physique.

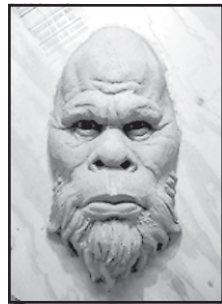
He placed one on his own property and quickly found it scared away coyotes who had been making off with many of his pet feral cats.

The other was stationed between Ranchita Realty and the Ranchita Country Store along Highway S22 last month.

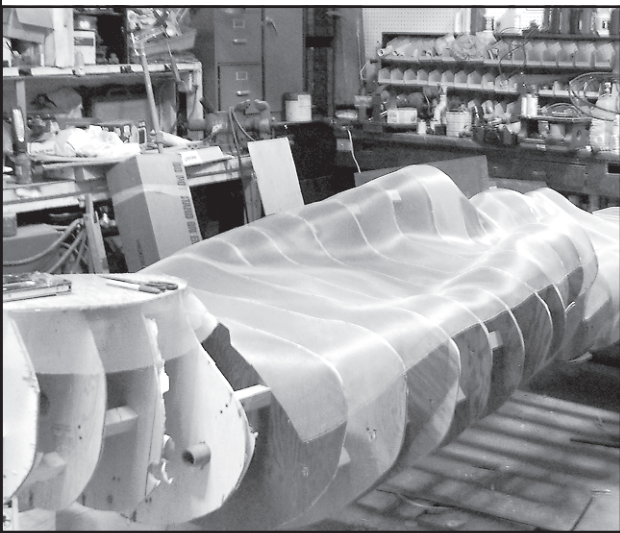
Reaction to the glossy, white monster at the town center has been extremely positive among residents and tourists, several locals told a visitor on Jan. 14.

"Someday we're going to be known for this," said one. "He's put us on the map," said another.

See **MONSTER**, Page 8



ARTIST Marc Alfrey designed the face.



RAUH's creations are comprised of 12 separate pieces assembled in a workshop just outside his home.



RANCHITA residents admire the eye-catching monster sculpted and built by real estate broker and neighbor Joe Rauh (in the white shirt).

MONSTER: Contest seeks suitable name

Continued from Page 5

"That guy has done so much for our town he should be our mayor," expressed one fan of Rauh's.

The community is holding a contest to name the big creature, and several residents want to name him after Rauh. They also look forward to dressing the beast in seasonal hats and even tie-dyed shirts.

Rauh is enjoying the reactions from

locals and tourists who stop by to visit and play with his monster. He can see them from his office door.

"Just the people who stop by and comment on it are a real entertainment factor themselves," he says.

He has built a Web site to promote the sale of future models, roadsidemonster.com. He hopes other businesses might enjoy the draw that a roadside attraction can bring.

Base models, such as the two he

has already built, will go for about \$4,500, he says. Others can be customized with solar-powered flashing eyes, hidden cameras and speakers with vocal recordings. Hands can be installed at different angles to hold signs and other items.

Each monster, he notes, takes about a month to build.

"It's so enjoyable, it really is – it's a kick," Rauh says. "I never realized what a frustrated artist I was."

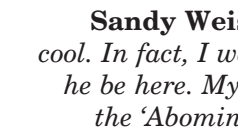
—SPEAK UP!

Ranchita residents like their new monster – and his creator

Ranchita residents have a monstrous new attraction – an 11-foot fiberglass yeti – and a new burst of community spirit since the imaginative creation of local real estate broker Joe Rauh was installed at the Ranchita town center on Dec. 26. Our "Speak Up" reporter asked Ranchitans for their views on the yeti and what they'd name him.



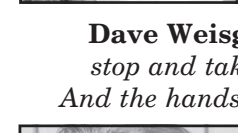
Jocelyn Wilson – "I think it's done a lot for my business (the Ranchita Country Store). I get new people all the time stopping by to get their picture. And I'd like to name him 'Little Joe.' The reason is, I had someone come in and ask me, 'Why this?,' and (Joe's) the creator and someday Ranchita will be famous for this."



Sandy Weisgerber – "I think the yeti's pretty cool. In fact, I was one of the people who suggested he be here. My husband suggested (naming him) the 'Abominable Joe-Man' after Joe Rauh. Dr. Frankenstein had his monster and Joe has his."



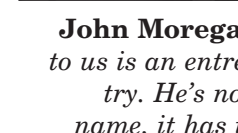
Patty Jo Moregart – "I think we should name him 'Joe Buddy' because he's going to be our mascot. He's also going to be our buddy, and he might as well be called that, and Joe's our buddy."



Dave Weisgerber – "I think it's great. People stop and take their pictures – a lot of families. And the hands are at the right height for a lot of shoulders. I think I'd name him 'Joe Jr.'"



Carolyn Morrow – "I think he's great. He's a great conversation starter and helps give our little community an identity. It's fun. It's a lot of fun. But I don't know what I'd call him."



John Moregart – "It think it fits Joe. Joe Rauh to us is an entrepreneur. There's nothing he won't try. He's not afraid of anything. As far as the name, it has to have something to do with Joe."



Al Hatcher – "I am the vice president of the (Montezuma Valley) historical society, and it was our idea to have him put there. ... There were three girls who came here right after and saw him and started taking pictures. I don't know what I'd name it. I haven't thought about it. I've been kind of sleeping on it."

