

# 'Art on the Grand' draws eclectic mix of artists, styles

BY KEVIN BROWN  
STAFF WRITER  
kbrown@homecomm.net

The Farmington Area Founders Festival "Art on the Grand" art fair was less than an hour old, and artists were already selling their wares.

"We just got here and we're already spending money. I don't know if that is a good sign or a bad sign," said Linda Austin of Farmington Hills.

She carried a lilac-colored plastic bag with several mat-mounted watercolors inside. With her at the fair site, along

Grand River just west of Farmington Road downtown, was daughter Lindsay. Mother and daughter opted for shorts and sleeveless tops, fitting outdoor attire amid near 90-degree temperatures.

Along with other early fair goers Thursday, they checked out a display of small epoxy-cast soldiers, dragons and even chess pieces. "You could just display the chess pieces," Linda Austin observed.

The artist, Kevin Heekin of Cincinnati, said he got into creating the pieces as a kid. "I've

always been able to sculpt. I started playing board games and Dungeons and Dragons when I was a teenager."

Like several artists, he offers work in a wide price range—\$1.25 to \$225—to present something for all.

While crafts continue to be prominently presented at the Festival, Art on the Grand organizer Nancy Coumoundouros said the goal was to add a fine arts show to the festival.

"We went out and visited shows all year long. We identified artists we wanted to invite and had a mailing list of 500," said Coumoundouros, Farmington cultural arts coordinator. Fifty-four artists participated in the inaugural event.

Coumoundouros said organizers tried to draw artists to the show by emphasizing that the area has many artists, that organizers wanted to present fine arts "and that we'd treat them well," she said.

"We wanted to attract a wide variety, paintings, jewelry; we have some unusual glass sculptures."

Glass artist Steve Brewster of Florida said he exhibits at 30 art fairs throughout the year. He used to show his carved, fused and blown glass at the more famous Ann Arbor Art Fair, also held during the local Festival weekend. But he turned down that fair this

year.

"It's too big; it's too much," he said.

Brewster, in a gray T-shirt and black shorts, wore black and white tennis shoes without socks to help beat the heat. The artist said the least he's ever made at an art fair was \$10,000. "Last weekend in Columbus I made \$23,000," he said.

At a Farmington High School

Art Club display was teacher Gail Piepenburg with a group of students including Danielle Miller, a Central Michigan University freshman this fall, and Roberto Matto. Among items on display were cut linoleum prints and a chair painted in bright, vibrant acrylic color then varnished.

Piepenburg showed a visitor hand-stitched books created by

students and handmade paper suitable for use as fine stationery, made from materials including dryer lint and animal fur.

Mixed in with the row of art booths was hammered dulcimer player Charlene Berry.

A stage set up nearby hosted performers throughout the day, to create an interactive atmosphere, Coumoundouros explained.



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BREWSTER

A day at the Fair: Jeremy Allan Kittel and Jesse Mason play celtic tunes. Above, right: Rosie and John Taube stroll through fine art booths with their kids Nathan, Matthew and Joshua (hidden behind Dad).



A fine brush: Kevin Heekin paints small figures and chess pieces.



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