

First Night button sales, plans moving briskly

See related column, opinion page.

By Greg Kowalski
staff writer

Plans for the First Night/Birmingham arts celebration are moving as briskly as the typical New Year's Eve weather, said Zina Kramer, program executive director.

More than 40 performing acts are scheduled to appear at sites across the city between 4 p.m. and midnight New Year's Eve.

New this year will be a special arts presentation in store windows on Maple between Woodward and Bates.

The artworks are being created especially for First Night, and a percentage of profits from works sold will be donated to First Night.

"Part of the whole theme of First Night is to support the arts," said Kramer. The works will be on display the week between Christmas and New Year's.

FIRST NIGHT treasurer Bruce Arensmeier said sales of the buttons that allow entrance to the various events are way up over last year.

More than 300 of the \$5 (\$7 on New Year's Eve) buttons have been sold so far. Last year at this time, about 100 buttons had been sold.

Buttons are on sale at Crowley's, Fidelity Bank branches, Michigan National Bank branches, Dell Unique, Morel's, The Community House, Tavern on 13 and Kroger's stores in the Birmingham-Bloomfield area.

"Things are going better than last year. Sales aren't overwhelming, but they're going well," Arensmeier said.



"This year people know what it will be like," he added. Some locations this year will donate a dollar to charity for every button redeemed, he added.

Although plans are progressing well, there has been at least one glitch, Kramer said.

THE WOODWARD Square mall building will not be used as a site, as originally planned. The building's new owners recently hired a new development firm, which backed out of the event.

"It's strictly a liability situation, no other reason intended or implied," said Alan Hayman, secretary-treasurer of the Hayman Co.,

the new developers. Kramer said that the acts planned for the building will be rescheduled at other sites.

"We'll have an insert in the programs that night showing the new locations," Kramer said. First Night also needs volunteers to work four-hour shifts that evening and volun-

teers should call 540-6883. First Night was conceived as an alcohol-free, "family-oriented celebration of the arts" for New Year's. Various singers, comedians, musical acts, puppet shows, theater presentations and other performers will take the stage at more than a dozen locations throughout Birmingham.

Dolan, Dunaskiss on DNR panel

State Rep. Jan Dolan, R-Farmington Hills, and State Sen. Mat Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion, are among the legislators named by Gov. John Engler to an advisory panel on restructuring the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

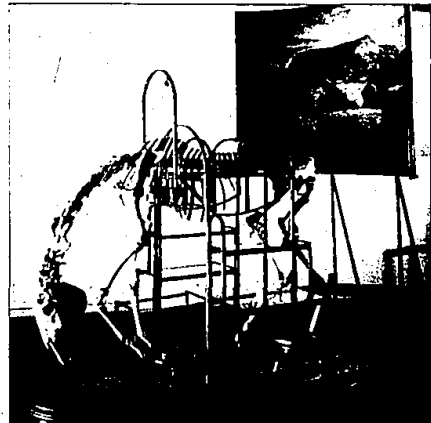
The nine-member panel will advise the governor who on Nov. 8 issued an executive order to reorganize the DNR. One of the changes envisioned by Engler is the elimination of agencies like the Air Pollution Control Commission, whose functions include granting, or rejecting, permits for operating the proposed incinerator in Auburn Hills and reopening the incinerator in Madison Heights.

Engler's proposed reorganization has drawn criticism from legislators and environmental groups who say eliminating commissions will reduce and curtail public input into state policies.

One Southfield activist summarized her opposition this way. "Reorganizing the DNR would be a disaster," said Carol Izant.

State Sen. Dunaskiss, however, said the panel is designed to assure public input.

"I am deeply concerned about the need to guarantee citizen input on the DNR," he said. "Our ultimate goal is to strengthen the DNR and make it more responsive."



Steve Barry's environmental concerns are reflected in his 1991 sculpture *Conserver (The Fifth Horse)*, complete with moving parts.

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