

## Group creates assembly line for 'culture'

For many people, the notion of "culture" in metro Detroit is forever linked with a four-wheel invention that drinks gas, pounds pistons and cruises on radial tires.

For generations, the prevailing logic has been "If it don't come off an assembly line, it ain't culture."

Welcome to a new millennium. We're talking minivans stamped with Mercedes-Benz. Cures for cancer. Genetic codes replacing zip codes. Palm-sized computers. And, praise to Dionysus! Viagra.

With a refreshing and fertile vision, the Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan has in mind another type of assembly line when it comes to the arts.

In late March, the Community Foundation announced a \$4.2 million, five-year program that included \$1.7 million in grants to local arts groups while providing a network for unprecedented collaboration among artists.

Metro Detroit through the Community Foundation was selected to receive \$1 million along with other communities, including Boston, Miami, Kansas City, and the Humboldt and Silicon Valley areas of California.

Next month, the first signs of the program will become evident with a forum to discuss strategies on building an audience. (Details of the forum will be made available in the next few weeks.)

The catalyst for the program is the New York-based Lila Wallace Reader's Digest Fund, which contributed \$10 million to community foundations around the country. The funds are to be used solely to help build audiences for the arts.

The arts and marketing. Marketing and the arts. Hey, this is the '90s.

### Parts of the plan

During the last month and a half, the Community Foundation has held a series of briefings with the local arts community to explain the elements of the program including:

- A Celebration of Culture Campaign intended to raise public awareness about local culture, from what's happening at the DIA to upcoming ethnic festivals.

- A Cultural Forum to provide an ongoing venue to discuss the arts.

- A Directory of Artists and Arts Groups, including a toll-free phone number that lists cultural events.

- Grants to arts groups, the requirements of which will be made available by the end of the year.

Funding for the balance of the \$4.2 million program was provided by the Kresge Foundation, Hudson-Webber Foundation, McGregor Fund, David M. Whitney Fund, Ford Motor Co. Fund, NBD and Comerica.

About \$500,000 of the total will be raised through private donations by the Community Foundation.

Last year, the Community Foundation pooled the donations of 3,400 donors to make \$27 million in grants to a range of community organizations.

That amount ranked the Community Foundation among the top 30 foundations in the country.

### A new assembly

"These are tough times for arts organizations," said Larry Coppard, senior project consultant for the program.

Our goal is simply to bring resources to these arts groups. Historically, they've had a hard time marketing themselves because their main focus was to put their work into their art."

The Community Foundation's program is not a substitute for public funding, said Coppard.

Nor is it a replacement for what the donating foundations give to the arts, he said.

"The foundations are looking for ways to build a larger, more stable base for the arts," said Mariam Noland, president of the Community Foundation.

It's about improving the quality of life in communities where they conduct business."

Both Coppard and Noland admit, however, that the biggest challenge is to bring together arts groups and to persuade the public to think differently about culture in metro Detroit.

"We've got the inventory, the parts, and now we're in the assembly stage," said Coppard.

That process, he said, sometimes before.

## HAUNTING IMAGES

OF A

## LOST WORLD

Photo exhibit of Jewish life in Poland before Holocaust

Like the sepia tone that spreads over aged black and white photographs, the unspeakable horror of history seeps across Sonia Nothman's face.

"This is my first priority," she said while waiting to speak about her experiences as a survivor of Nazi concentration camps.

On this day, however, the rows of chairs remain empty in Shiffman Hall at the Jewish Community Center where Nothman is scheduled to speak.

It's one day after the photo exhibit "And I Still See Their Faces" opened, and there's a chilling silence in response to the speaker series which features Holocaust survivors from Poland.

Only one person — a reporter covering the exhibit — shows up. But Nothman of West Bloomfield doesn't hesitate when the time comes to give her lecture.

"I will tell you my story," she said to the reporter.

Then she sits down, fixing her eyes on a distant point in the expansive hall. And as if inducing a spell, she conjures up the events of more than 50 years ago in intimate and eerie detail. Apparently the painful memories haven't faded. Nothman has just learned to live with the anguish.

Invariably, she begins each lecture with the statement: "My parents taught us not to hate, that is my main message."

It's an excruciating lesson. While Nothman's three sisters and one brother survived, her parents did not.

They left behind a simple but highly communal life in a pre-industrialized Poland and five offspring to testify about what Nothman calls "Hell on earth."

"And I Still See Their Faces" captures in gut-wrenching irony the agrarian lifestyle in pre-World War II Poland where 3 million Jews lived. At the time, Poland had the largest Jewish population in Europe.

Some of the photographs appear torn from family scrapbooks. Others are well-conceived compositions of Jewish men playing chess, a solitary figure walking down a narrow village street and a group of students earnestly studying Hebrew.

Please see IMAGES, C2



A: Chana Gross Perlbacher (shown here) lived in Krakow, Poland. She was the mother of two sons. In mid-December 1942, she and her mother were executed by a firing squad.

B: These children reportedly lived in Kalisz. The photo was taken by a neighbor. Their names are unknown.

C: Two Jewish men play chess while on vacation at Skrychyn in the 1920s.

D: Friends gather on a beach in Sopot, Poland in the early 1930s.

## THEATER



Nathan Keen

## Young actor growing up on his own terms

While his classmates shuttled about inside Pierce Elementary in Birmingham, 10-year-old Nathan Keen stood outside in the parking lot, untangling the string of his yo-yo.

With innocent deliberation he threw down the spinning toy, then snapped the string upward. Up and down, up and down it went. For a moment, he seemed to enjoy the routine.

"I don't want to be a 40-year-

old when I'm 12," said Keen, who recently debuted in the role of the Little Boy in the national tour production of "Ragtime."

"It's important for me to have my childhood."

In size and appearance, Keen is very much a typical pre-teen, interested in building pirate ships with Legos, playing video games, and, of course, flicking his yo-yo.

But his life is the furthest

thing from routine. Indeed, it's more like he's riding on the back of a rocket.

For today, Keen of Beverly Hills has jetted into town to celebrate his 10th birthday with his family and friends. In less than 24 hours, he'll be back at his home away from home — the National Theatre in Washington, D.C.

It's his first trip back since "Ragtime" opened in late April.

The six-month contract will keep him on tour through September.

### Looking the part

While some kids his age make a few bucks cutting lawns or delivering newspapers, Keen is in one of the most critically acclaimed musicals of the year. Recently, the Broadway produc-

Please see ACTOR, C2

## Not your cup of tea? Think again

Ann Kuffler has a deal for anyone obsessed with the practical side of life. You know, those people so concerned with utility that they think that buying art is a luxury.

Kuffler's advice: Think of art as something that can be used every day. Just like a plate, bowl, vase or coffee mug.

"From the choice of mug to a painting, everything we do is an artistic decision," said Kuffler of Bloomfield Hills.

That's right, she said. Everything.

WHAT: "Steeped in Tradition," an exhibit of contemporary teapots.

WHERE: Ariana Gallery, 119 S. Main, Royal Oak; (248) 540-6810

HOURS: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday-Saturday

Highfalutin art marketers take notice.

As if to illustrate her point, Kuffler has arranged "Steeped in Tradition," the 12th annual international teapot show at Ariana Gallery in Royal Oak.

The diverse collection of teapots appears more like a functional sculpture exhibit. But according to Kuffler,

even a functional item like a teapot is a work of art.

There should be no argument. The works of 65 international ceramic artists have transformed a simple receptacle for steeping dried leaves into a playful, sensuous statement about the pleasure of imbuing tea.

Sure, there are a few of those cutesy or trendy-looking pots. But overall, like any thoughtful exhibit, "Steeped in Tradition" pushes conventions and confronts issues of space, shape and, of

Please see TEA, C2



Tea time: Ann Kuffler of West Bloomfield has curated a diverse show of teapots at Ariana Gallery in Royal Oak.