

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Calling all singers for special event

Jerry Smith is looking for a few good singers for a one-time engagement with the All Community Church Choir.

Smith quips that if you can carry a tune and are involved with a church music program, you won't even have to audition and will get a free breakfast to boot.

Singers will perform as part of the Livonia Prayer Breakfast program beginning at 7:15 a.m. Tuesday, May 23, at St. Mary's Cultural Center in Livonia. (That's where the free breakfast comes in.)

Smith was asked a year ago to bring Livonia church choirs together to sing for the breakfast where city officials, educators and citizens meet for prayer and to hear an inspirational message. Richard Stearns, president of World Vision, an organization which feeds children all over the world, will speak at the May 23 breakfast. Call Sally Butler for more information about the breakfast (248) 476-9427.

Think globally, act locally

In January, Smith, who's minister of music at Ward Presbyterian Church in Northville, sent letters to all Livonia churches. So far 70 singers from nearly a dozen choirs have made the commitment to perform at the Prayer Breakfast, but ideally Smith would like to have 100.

Rehearsals will take place 3 p.m. Sunday, May 7, and 9:30 a.m. Saturday, May 20. The program plays on the theme "think globally, act locally."

"We're looking for people active in a church music program anywhere in Livonia," said Smith, a Livonia resident who was choir director at Bentley High School for 27 years. "We wanted to let people know about the opportunity because so many times the members of different church choirs don't even know what's going on in their own community. This is fresh and exciting, not the same old, same old. It's something extraordinary."

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Busy days

In addition to coordinating and directing the choir for the Prayer Breakfast, Smith is busy getting ready for the Easter production at Ward Presbyterian, where he has been minister of music for the last 27 years. And that's no easy task. But Smith's hard work is what makes being a musician at Ward Presbyterian rewarding.

Even though Smith jokes it seems like a hundred years since he's been minister of music at the church, don't let that fool you. Deep down inside, he loves directing the church's 200-voice choir, 38 piece orchestra, 70-voice youth choir that tours the country every year, two women's choirs, a male choir, brass ensemble, flute choir, and handbell ringers. Last year, he was able to tour Switzerland and England with 60 members of the 200-voice choir. This year they'll stay relatively close to home when they sing in Canada. Next year, they're off to France. In between his duties at the church, Smith continues to practice his other love—teaching. He instructs students in the fine points of music theory as well as chairs the music department at William Tyndale College in Farmington Hills.

For more information about joining the All Community Church Choir, call Smith at (248) 374-7400.

Have an interesting idea for a story? Call arts reporter Linda Ann Chomin at (734) 953-2146 or send e-mail to lchomin@oe.hometown.com



"Suspended Expressions: Visions in Glass"

What: The works of Richard Ritter selected from public and private collections.
When: Through Sunday, April 30. Opening reception to meet the artist 5-8 p.m. Friday, April 7, discussion with Ritter at 6:30 p.m.
Where: Alfred Berkowitz Gallery, University of Michigan-Dearborn, 4903 Evergreen Road, Dearborn, (313) 593-5400 or (313) 593-5087
Ritter's work will also be featured at the 28th Annual International Glass Invitational Exhibition, opening 8 p.m. Saturday, April 8 at Habitat Galleries, 7 N. Saginaw, Pontiac. Exhibit runs through Sunday, April 30, call (248) 333-2060 for information.

Sculptor creates new worlds from glass

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
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The properties of glass mesmerized Richard Ritter from the first time he used the material at Society of Arts & Crafts more than 30 years ago. Today, Ritter is one of the leading artists in the contemporary studio glass movement.

Just gazing into one of his sculptures, it's easy to understand why the Alfred Berkowitz Gallery at the University of Michigan-Dearborn is celebrating the work of the internationally recognized glass artist with an exhibit that continues through the end of the month. Ritter opens windows to another world. Sea-like forms swim amidst layers upon layers of glass. Flowers and butterflies seem suspended in time inside these crystal mini-universes.

The sculptures, vessels, paperweights and wall pieces in "Suspended Expressions: Visions in Glass" span nearly 30 years of Ritter's career, including his first attempt at blowing a green glass bottle at Society of Arts & Crafts (now Center for Creative Studies).

Back in the days when Ritter helped department founder Gil Johnson build the first furnace at the Detroit school, students used scrap glass to create vessels and goblets. Gallery curator Joseph Marks' selection of 71 pieces from public and private collections document Ritter's pursuit of his passion since that time.

Collectors

In addition to five pieces from the university's permanent collection, Jack and Aviva Robinson, Stuart and Maxine Frankel and Norman and Susan Pappas, Bloomfield Hills; Hugh and Carolyn Greenberg and Byron and Dorothy Gerson, Franklin; William and Electra Stamelos and Peter and Zoe Kokenakes, Livonia; Sophia Pearlstein, Southfield; and glass artist Fred Birkhill, Pinckney, lent work to the show.

Ritter is returning to Michigan to participate in a discussion on glass with beadmaker Kristina Logan and Art Museum Project director Kenneth Gross, 6:30 p.m. Friday, April 7, at the university gallery. On

Please see GLASS C2

EXHIBIT

Artists show talent for color and design

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Joan Ehrstine and Jim Patterson are setting out on a new adventure. At the ages of 69 and 68, respectively, the two painters will be exhibiting their works with the Livonia Artists Club April 8-9 in the atrium of the Livonia Civic Center Library.

While Patterson has been exhibiting his work for some time in shows such as Our Town at the Community House in Birmingham and Fine Arts in the Village at Greenmead Historical Village, Livonia, this is the first time he is showing work with the Livonia Artists Club.

Ehrstine, a Plymouth Township resident, is showing her work for a third time.

Sense of accomplishment

More than 20 members will exhibit up to five paintings each. There will also be reasonably priced unframed art in bins.

"It makes me feel good that I can show what I'm working on," said Ehrstine. "I feel I've accomplished something that might be pleasing to other people."

A Livonia Artists Club member for three years, Ehrstine has been painting watercolors for seven years. She took up the medium after retiring as the church organist for Rice Memorial in Redford after 24 years.

She studied drawing and colored pencil at Art Store & More in Livonia before deciding to take watercolor classes at Schoolcraft College with Westland artist Sandra Weed. A volunteer at Greenmead Historical Village, where she serves on the board of the Livonia Historical Society and edits its newsletter, Ehrstine presently makes time for classes with Livonia artist Audrey Harkins because she loves watercolor.

"I thought it would be the easiest thing because you were working with water, but I was so

Please see EXHIBIT, C2



Eclectic show: Joan Ehrstine and Jim Patterson show some of the watercolor paintings featured in the Livonia Artists Club exhibit.