



Relaxing: Neville and Marilyn Clouten browse through the bins of art for sale. They are both artists and have watercolors in the show.



Fest: Elaine Simpson (at right) reads her work during the Ridgewriter's readings Monday at the Arts Festival in the Costick Center. At left, May Arvo displays a ceramic dish that was up for auction at Saturday night's gala, a kickoff to the weeklong events.



Arts from page A1

gold fabric, to try and soften it, and hide the basketball hoops. We did eradicate the smell of sweat socks."

The only aroma in the room that night emanated from a long buffet table, catered by Gourmet Express of South Lyon. The menu featured smoked beef in mushroom sauce, chicken tenders, salads and hot vegetables, as well as a "sweet" table.

While the buffet line may have moved too slowly for some, the wait was tempered by music from the Matt Michaels Trio. Several items were raffled off, including 45 minutes with a personal trainer and a day at the State Capitol with Rep. Andrew Raczkowski, who promised a closer look at the inner workings of government.

The day in Lansing generated a \$160 bid, from Phil Hadley, who works with the Farmington Flyers. Although several people urged him to do so, Raczkowski's likely Democratic opponent this fall, Aldo Vagnozzi, refused to push up the price.

"People asked me to, but I didn't take it. My feeling is, I'll be up there next year, so I can walk."

Barber and Woollard heard only positive comments from guests. Woollard believes those

who attended last year were impressed enough to bring their friends this year. If that's so, next year's event should draw an even larger crowd.

"It's going to be bigger and better," she said. "There'll be a wide variety of items for auction."

On Monday, the festival featured a poetry and prose reading by members of the Ridgewriters, an area writers group.

"Some of us write for a hobby, some of us write for publication," said Brian Murphy. "But we all get together for support and encouragement."

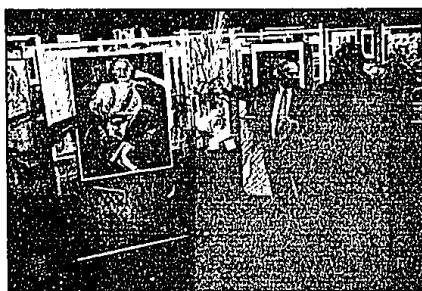
Although attendance was sparse, perhaps because of the weather, the material drew applause and the occasional chuckle. Author Leon Schoichit shared the following "Musings and Observations":

■ "When dangling, don't use participles."

■ "If a book about failure doesn't get published, does that make it a success?"

■ "Can you be a closet claustrophobic?"

Writing also took center stage later that evening with readings from the Teen Creative Writing contest winners. More than 400 middle and high school students from the Farmington area participated in the Creative Writing



Gala: The "Starry Night" gala gave guests, such as Rich Weigand, Del Mecum and Terry True, time to browse through art set up for the week of exhibits and activities. The festival continues through Sunday.

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