

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Dinner auction supports fanclub for children's art education

They say you get back more than you give and it's true. Last Friday and Saturday our Southeast Region Committee for VSA arts of Michigan put on its annual festival which brought in more than 220 performers with disabilities from Pontiac, Birmingham, Livonia and Detroit. Part of the fun for me was making art with the singers, dancers and chime players at an activities table after they came off the stage at Livonia Mall.

John Bloom knows exactly how I feel. He's been helping to provide arts programs for children in the tri-county area with his fanclub ARTS FOUNDATION since 1989. In 2002 alone, the nonprofit organization awarded grants to Michigan Opera Theater's Community Outreach program, Birmingham Bloomfield Arts Center, Pewabic Pottery, Hillberry Theatre, Maggie Allesee Department of Dance at Wayne State University, Youthatre in Southfield, and Holy Redeemer High School in south-

■ 'It was necessary to have someone to step up the need for arts education. With all the cutbacks in the schools, kids have been denied an education in the arts. Art gives them other ways besides crime to express themselves. We provide grants for students with parents of low to high income. It's important especially in the inner city that everyone has this chance to be able to go to a museum or symphony.'

John Bloom
Southfield resident, fundraiser

west Detroit, to name a few. But Bloom didn't do it alone. That's why it's important for all of us to support fundraisers such as fanclub's wine auction and dinner Saturday, May 11, at Neiman Marcus in Somerset South in Troy. It will be your only chance until their Aug. 23 Latin-theme dance benefit at the Detroit Zoo.

Besides enjoying red, white and desert wines from Terrabonca Estates in Tuscany and a four-course dinner prepared by Chef Dan Vernia of the Zodiac, you'll go home feeling good that you're helping open up the world of opera, ceramics, theater, dance, and the visual arts to children. Of course, if you did on the wine lot, spa and travel packages, and baskets of goodies the fun continues after the gala evening ends.

Like VSA arts of Michigan, fanclub inspires young people in the arts. Bloom encourages any like minded organizations to apply for help. Recipients are selected by a committee after sending a letter detailing their arts education program. The deadline is in September.

"It was necessary to have someone to step up the need for arts education," said Bloom, a Southfield resi-

Please see CHOMIN, B6

RITE OF Spring



Think spring: Nicario Jimenez created this three-dimensional fruit seller scene (above) by molding boiled potatoes and Plaster of Paris. It is one of the hundreds of art works in the Birmingham Fine Art Festival. The blown glass sculptural vessel (left below) is one of the newest works by Stan Megdall. Michael Bryant brings his floral photographs (right).

Outdoor festival first to blossom with art

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER
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Stan Megdall sounds like a kid eagerly awaiting his first day back at school. The West Bloomfield glass blower is thrilled about showing his new designs in the area's first outdoor art show after working on them all winter. The Birmingham Fine Art Festival, Saturday-Sunday, May 11-12, marks the beginning of a season of interaction between prospective buyers and himself. Like in years past, Megdall expects visitors to ask questions about the process involved with creating the whimsical, yet mysterious, figurative vessels with corkscrew arms.

"I'm excited about the new work and the new season," said Megdall, a graduate of Birmingham Groves High School who first studied glass blowing at age 16 with Albert Young at the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center. We started partnering with the Birmingham Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce six years ago and wanted to grow it slowly from 180 to 210 and now 300 artists. We added entertainment three years ago in front of city hall and expanded it this year.

"It's like the feeling you get when spring finally arrives or the first day of school. Birmingham is the kick off. I have a source book that rates all of the shows on

attendance, types of art, food. Birmingham receives high marks in everything. The good stuff sells because the people are knowledgeable about art. They don't ask, 'do you have it in blue?' They want to know how you made it."

While Megdall and the other 299 artists are crafting their wares, Janet Torno is taking care of last minute details. The Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center executive director will need plenty of rest before the big weekend which starts 6 a.m. Friday when crews begin to set up tents. By noon the artists start arriving.

"It's grown over the years," said Torno who took over producing the event six years ago. "Originally it was an art fair held inside the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center. We started partnering with the Birmingham Bloomfield Chamber of Commerce six years ago and wanted to grow it slowly from 180 to 210 and now 300 artists. We added entertainment three years ago in front of city hall and expanded it this year. There's more variety and ethnic diversity." Family hands-on art

activities at The Community House, demos by Birmingham Bloomfield Art Center instructors and nine food vendors, including the newest - Ben & Jerry's ice cream, adds to the festivities.

"It's a community event," said Torno. "There will be free hair braiding by the staff from Virtuoso salon. Volkswagen will again be giving away

T-shirts and prizes in their Meet Your Twin game. We're working in partnership with the Detroit Piano Teachers Association to present performances by students in the family art activities area. New this year is our silent auction which closes 3 p.m. Sunday at the corner of Merrill and Henrietta. We'll also be selling T-shirts by featured artist Michael Bryant. All proceeds benefit the art center and chamber."

While the food, entertainment and games double the fun of the festival, it's the artists who visitors come to see. A total of 17 media will be on exhibit including ceramics, fiber, furniture, jewelry, painting, and wood.

"A committee of six juries the work," said Torno. "150 are invited back from last year after judging on site. The rest are juried from slides so there's a mix of new and returning artists."

"We look for quality first and creativity, something interesting

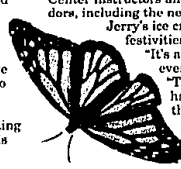
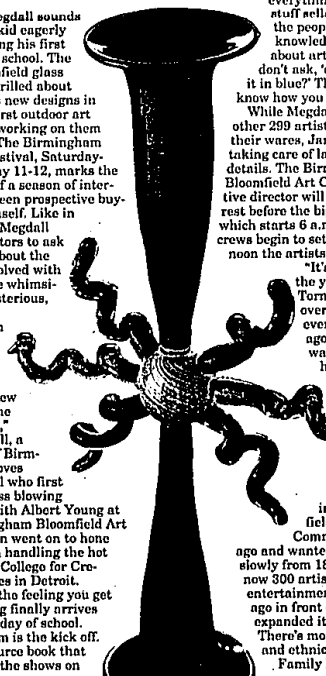
Please see FESTIVAL, B7

BIRMINGHAM FINE ART FESTIVAL

What: Featuring 300 artists, a silent fine art auction, family hands-on art activities, and live entertainment

When: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, May 11, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, May 12

Where: Shalin Park, north of Merrill, east of Bates, Birmingham. For more information, call (248) 644-0866



OPERA

New talent: Karla Hughes (far left) is one of the young apprentices who sang in the Armenian opera Anoush in November.



Apprentice program trains professional singers of the future

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Think it's easy becoming the next Luciano Pavarotti or Maria Callas? Karla Hughes drives all the way from Toledo at least five days a week to take part in Michigan Opera Theatre's Young Artist Apprentice Program. It is just one more step on a long road to achieving her dream of one day singing a leading or supporting role

on the stage of a major company.

Hughes already has years of training behind her plus a master's degree in opera performance from Wichita State University. Still she needs the experience generally unavailable in apprentice programs. Vocal training with a coach, rehearsals and performances make for a long day but she hopes to return next year. The pro-

Please see APPRENTICE, B2

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

What: Presents Lakme, a tragic love story set in mid-19th century India, sung in French with English sur-titles translation
When: Saturday, May 11 to Sunday, May 19
Where: Detroit Opera House
1528 Broadway
Tickets: Call (313) 237-SING or online at www.MichiganOpera.org