

Visit the National Amphibian Conservation Center during Sunset at the Zoo.

Sunset at the Zoo is the wildest party in town

The polar bears won't be the focus of attention at Sunset at the Zoo this year but that won't stop my sister and I from visiting them to the Arctic Ring of Life. For me, that's the most enjoyable part of the

Detroit Zoo's annual fundraiser. How often do you have the opportunity to enjoy all of the animals living there after hours?

Of course, the strolling dinner featuring tasty treats from dozens of top Detroit

arc restaurants and businesses has to be mentioned as well. Every year we go from booth to booth sampling specialties from The Whitney, More's, The Rattlesnake Club, and Whole Foods Market, to name a few. There's literally something to please everyone's palate at the event billed as the summer's wildest party.

But there's another reason the June 20 event is special this year.

This is our 75th anniversary and throughout the whole year there will be lots and lots of events, said zoo director Ron Kagan. "In honor of our 75th anniversary we have an incredible party planned for June 20, over 30 high-end restaurants presenting their signature dishes for a strolling dinner, and a jazz band from LA and two local bands. And proceeds go to National Amphibian Conservation Center. We continue to expand conservation programs at the center and in 2002 won the American Zoological Association's National Exhibit Award."

The zoo is also expanding other areas. Presently under construction next to the polar bears is the Great Ape Exhibit. Currently, the chimps are sharing an outdoor area with the

SUNSET AT THE ZOO

What: Spend time visiting the animals during an after-hours party which includes dinner.

When: 7-11 p.m. Friday, June 20

Where: Detroit Zoo, 8450 W. 10 Mile Road at Woodward Avenue and I-696, Royal Oak

Tickets: \$125, \$250, \$500 (benefactor ticket includes choice of feeding the giraffes or shadowing an amphibian curator.) Sunset prize keys are \$25 each or five for \$100. Call (248) 541-5717

gorillans on alternate days until their new digs open in late summer. On May 28, the zoo broke ground for a major indoor education center which is scheduled to open in about 1½ years.

The most exciting part about Sunset is we're celebrating 75 years of the zoo. That's quite an accomplishment and the zoo isn't done yet," said Jennifer Fischer, co-chair of the event and an Orchard Lake resident. "At Sunset you have the run of the zoo to yourself. When you go to the zoo you're usually dragging along children. This is after-hours so adults get to be children and play themselves."

This year we added a few more restaurants and we're selling zoo keys that open boxes holding special prizes. There will be a wine-tasting area and beer garden to sample different varieties of wine and beer, and the Poncho Sanchez Latin Band will be playing. It's a unique event and appeals to someone 20 or 70. That's what makes it so magical. Everyone can have fun."

Call Linda Ann Chomin at (734) 953-245 or send e-mail to lchomin@oehomecomm.net.

Strawberries reign at annual festival

BY CRYSTAL LIEBOLD
STAFF WRITER

Each year, The National Strawberry Festival in Belleville draws over 100,000 people and transforms the town into a strawberry wonderland.

"If you take a city street of a small town - two miles of Main Street shut down, completely lined with vendors and crafters and things for people to do - that's the city of Belleville for three days over Father's Day weekend," said Ralph Nodwell, president and executive officer of the event.

The festival kicks off its 27th year Friday, June 13, on Main Street in downtown Belleville. Come prepared with a full wallet and lots of energy, because there is no shortage of activities - bungee jumping, rock climbing, the mechanical bull-riding game and helicopter rides around the fair. Live performances include Grandpa Crockett's Puppet Show and the Acrobatic World Champion performance.

Mouth-watering strawberry delights are the main attraction - strawberry shortcake, chocolate-dipped strawberries, strawberry slurpees, slushes and shakes.

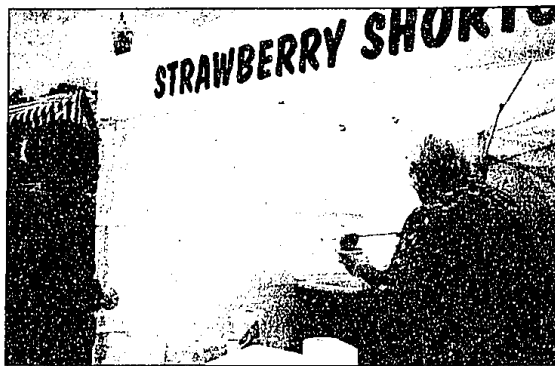
"My favorite? That would be strawberry shortcake," Nodwell laughed. "Heavens yes. No doubt about it."

The festival benefits local nonprofit organizations. "If we have money left over, we try to do something nice for the community," said Nodwell. "If we break even, we're happy."

Nodwell, who spends 12 months of the year searching for new ideas to improve the festival, said people should expect this year's event to be better than the last.

He is most excited about the square dancing 4-6 p.m. Saturday, and Gospel Day noon to 7 p.m. Sunday.

"One thing we emphasize every year is doing something different," he said. "Gospel Day is always a great big tremen-



Strawberry shortcake is just one of the luscious treats you can enjoy at the National Strawberry Festival in downtown Belleville.



Over 30,000 people come to watch the Festival Parade, which showcases floats, bands, motorcades, marching units, clowns and acrobats.

dous hit with the families."

Dan Martin, vendor and sponsor coordinator, stresses the festival is more than entertainment and fantastic food; it's also reaching out to the community.

"We go out of our way to make it a family festival," he said. "We say it's a weekend of fun for everyone, so we try to look after younger kids as well as older people. That's what I like about it."

The festival's success relies

largely on good weather. Although it's been rained on in the past, crowds don't stay away for too long.

"For 27 years, Mother Nature has been very good to us because we've been very good to her," said Nodwell. "Sometimes we'll get a shower here and there, but once it's over, the sun starts to shine and the people come out and we have a fantastic affair."

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STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL

What: Features arts and crafts, live entertainment, strawberry treats, children's and family activities.

When: Noon to 11 p.m. Friday, June 13; 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday, June 14; noon to 7 p.m. Sunday, June 15

Where: Downtown Belleville, I-94 to Belleville Road (exit 190). Head south to reach festival events.

Highlights: Strawberry Pancake Breakfast, Belleville High School, 8-11 a.m. Saturday, Festival Parade from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday; Victory Park Car Show noon to 4 p.m. Sunday.

For more information: Visit www.nationalstrawberryfest.com or call (734) 697-3137.

Detroit Now documents the art scene

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Everything about Detroit Now is a happening right down to the artists' receptions Friday-Saturday, June 6-7. Held in four different locations in Rochester and Detroit, the exhibit documents what's going on in the art scene in Detroit Now.

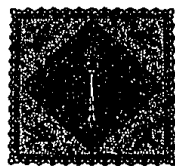
John Cynar, exhibition director of Paint Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester, came up with the concept a year ago. He wanted to link together four contemporary galleries to spotlight artists creating exciting work. The exhibit opens at Paint Creek and Meadows Brook Art Gallery June 6, Detroit contemporary and Detroit Artists Market June 7, with receptions linked by videos. Visitors can walk into Meadows Brook and see what's going on at Paint Creek. At Paint Creek a DJ will be spinning techno music.

"We're excited. It's kicking off the summer. The first night is in Rochester, the second night in Detroit," said Cynar.

"These are 16 artists making a difference right now. We're supportive of the Detroit art scene. This is the next generation of Detroit artists. They're not established artists but making an impact or will make one in the future."

At Paint Creek we're showing Riva Sayegh, painter Kai Kim, Marco Garcia's paintings and sculpture installation, and James Stoia, a metal sculptor. These artists create energy and excitement by actually making art and making a statement, and giving back to community."

Selecting artists for the exhibit wasn't as easy as Cynar makes it sound. Each of the four gallery directors - Cynar, Dick Goody at Meadows Brook, Aaron Timlin, Detroit contemporary, and Phaedra Robinson,



Riva Sayegh's work is on display at Paint Creek Center for the Arts in Rochester. This photograph is titled 'Blood is Thicker Than Water.'

Detroit Artists Market - brought a list of 10 artists' names to the table. From those 10, 16 were chosen for Detroit Now.

After closing at the four galleries June 29, the exhibit will be shown in its entirety at the Urban Institute of Contemporary Art in Grand Rapids in August.

"We learned a lot. We learned to compromise. We were introduced to artists we didn't know," said Cynar. "We wanted to take a stance, to show work that has merit and quality. That this is what's happening in the Detroit art scene

by promoting them as the next generation of artists."

Dick Goody refers to them as promising artists. He shies away from the words emerging, young and gifted.

"Contemporary art in Detroit is really international," said Goody, an assistant professor in the department of art and art history at Oakland University in Rochester.

"Artists come from all over. 'Silvia Almadi is an Iranian artist focusing on art about the veil. Renata Palubinska does realistic paintings usually featuring children. Her work reminds me of Flemish painting from the Renaissance. I can't describe Erik Meier's art but he's creating objects in a vacuum. He's currently working on a MFA at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills. Denise Whitebread Fanning is an installation artist. She'll be installing a lawn in the gallery."

"We'd like to get people in their 30s and 40s to see the show, people from Rochester. We want to get the community interested. It's a fun thing. It's serious but art can be entertaining."

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