Conversations *from page C1*

gan, "The Art of Performance." By the way, a sporty Jag is available for $55,000 in a color called anthracite, a.k.a. color of coal.

If that's not enough to induce dreaming, how about the piped in song, "At last my love has come along..." A bit much, perhaps.

Then again, there was a crowd of about a dozen would-be buyers fantasizing about sitting behind the wheel of the Jag.

All in all, the BMW display is arguably the most compelling. A large screen above the exhibit shows rolling clouds and molten being poured in what unfolds as an animated painting. The message: "What Did You Experience Today?"

Going too far

The award for going too far goes to Volvo for its display, "Volvo for Life." That's right. Forget about mpg, safety and cost.

Volvo promises to transform your life.

Their display is brightly lit, and the newest car models are set on a light hardwood floor. Written upon the glass backdrop are the words, fun, family, caring and excitement.

A film shown on a large screen in the middle of the exhibit shows a family from the 1950s awakening to the conveniences of the 21st century, including, of course, a ride in the new Volvo V70.

The image of a deliriously happy family driving along abandoned highways apparently captures the very essence of fun, family, caring and excitement.

Perhaps someone should've asked what road they were traveling on.

But hey, why spoil the fun.

It's the auto show. Dreams of the good life come on four wheels.

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BBAC *from page C1*

sen medium of expression.

"We're known for teaching a core curriculum of classes, but we also offer instruction in a range of mediums," said Janet Torno, executive director of the art center. "Many artists (on staff) are experimenting, crossing boundaries."

To emphasize the variety of classes, Torno pointed to a representational painting hung alongside a series of images derived from a Polaroid transfer technique taught in a class at the art center.

It's been the combination of course instruction, artists competitions, an annual art fair held in Shain Park and ongoing exhibits of local artists that has transformed the art center from a community group to a regional resource.

Torno contends the art center fills the gap between traditional academic programs and the type of venue provided by a contemporary arts museum. It's helped that tuition hasn't increased in three years.

"We're very accessible," said Torno. "People can walk in here and not feel intimidated. They'll see the works of unrecognized, and in many cases, emerging artists. It's a comfortable atmosphere."

Two years ago, the BBAC changed its name from the Birmingham Bloomfield Art Association. The difference between an association and a center, according to Torno, is largely perception.

Now, she contends, the common perception is the BBAC serves the entire region, not just the nearby communities where it's located.

The BBAC also has the budget to match its regional reach. The art center's annual budget, according to Torno, is larger than the Cranbrook Art Museum's. And the art center has a membership that draws students from the seven-county southeastern Michigan.

In size and style, the BBAC may be the prototypical 21st century art center. It promotes participation in the arts while showcasing works by the finest artists in the region. One of the art center's largest rooms, the Robinson Gallery, is dedicated to solo exhibits by a regional artist.

"People are so busy, and are realizing that there's a whole side of themselves that's being neglected," said Torno.

"We're offering them an opportunity to realize that art can help them find another perspective to their lives."

Theater *from page C1*

sick before opening night. Adults don't fare much better. They have no choice but to go to work the next day.

Branshaw subjects himself to this grueling routine repeatedly because, he said, he can't imagine "not doing theater."

"Everything is secondary to this," said the single man. "But I can't imagine doing this if I did have a family."

Peggy Deierlein of Rochester Hills is the mother of a theater buff. Her son, John (JD) Deierlein, was active in youth theater at Avon Players. He toured with the musical group, Up with People, earned his college degree and now teaches vocal music at Abbott Middle School in West Bloomfield.

Peggy was always glad to drive her son to and from rehearsals and shows, but it wasn't until he returned to the area and became involved again with Avon Players that she got the community theater bug.

"I started by helping out in about 1991 or 1992 and became more and more involved," she said.

Her interest lies behind the scenes, not on stage. She's worked props and scenery and moved up the ladder to producer.

"I can't even add up the number of hours it takes to work on a show," said Deierlein, whose husband, Paul, likes to work on scenery.

"When we're at rehearsal, that's maybe 12 hours a week. Then there's building the sets, making phone calls, going on the road looking for props, working on the program," she said. And that doesn't include the hours as producer she spends prior to the first audition.

"I have to get the production team together before we can do anything," she said. That means getting commitments for a costumer, props person, choreographer, light person, set designer, master carpenter and whomever else is needed.

She even spends time paying the bills.

"The producer is like the overseer if everyone does their job. She allows the director to just worry about directing," she added.

Deierlein is busy right now with "Made in the USA: Encore," which opened Friday at Avon Players.

Gowans' background is with directing. She does both music and stage directing, just as she's doing with The Village Players' "Oliver" production.

As a duo-director, she has to memorize the script, learn the music, decide what type of choreography she wants, get an idea for how she wants the play to be staged—the list continues.

She's been doing community theater since 1970, when she first joined The Village Players. Within a couple of years, she was an active member of other community theater groups, such as St. Dunston's Theater Guild, Ridgedale Players and Franklin Village Players. An accomplished pianist, Gowans has never wanted to devote the same hours to music professionally.

"I'm afraid theater and music would become a job," she said. "This way if I burn out, I can take some time off."

What is it about community theater that hooks people in?

"It's a good hobby, a great way to relax," said Gowans. "If nothing else, it's fun."

"It's a social outlet!" said Deierlein. "If you have any type of interest in theater, then you're with people who have similar interests. Some people golf; I do community theater."

And to paraphrase Irving Berlin, "There's no business like (community theater) show business."

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