

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Quaint art fair at Greenmead has stroll appeal

Next to working in the garden and taking Shamrock, my Irish Wolfhound to the park to run, my favorite summer activity is visiting art fairs with my sister Gwen. We call it "doing our sister thing." Sometimes we don't buy anything; other times we spend time adding up how much we ride home. But we always have fun.

Each of the fairs has a special charm and we each have reasons for returning year after year. Art in the Park in Plymouth offers the opportunity to not only browse through hundreds of booths filled with art works but shop for jewelry and home accessories that you can't find at malls or chain stores.

While the Ann Arbor Art Fairs showcase almost triple the amount of artists as Plymouth, this granddaddy of street festivals does have its drawbacks. One year I carried a heavy

Livonia Art in the Village
What: 170 artists and craftsmen will exhibit a variety of media
When: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, June 9, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday, June 10
Where: Greenmead Historical Park, 20504 Newburgh, south of Eight Mile Road, call (734) 466-2536 for information

Art and history

Closer to home, art fair lovers can check out a variety of media while walking through the historical village known as Greenmead in Livonia. Sponsored by the Livonia Arts Commission, Art in the Village, which takes place Saturday-Sunday, June 9-10, provides free parking and shuttle service plus a historic setting.

You can pause in the middle of dirt roads imagining a bygone era, stroll through volunteer-tended gardens, or rest in the peaceful setting after visiting the 170 booths in the fair.

One of our favorite things to do is sit down and have a lemonade. Twenty-percent of the sales from J & J Concession & Nuts goes to the Southeast Region Committee of VSA arts of Michigan. The committee uses the money to provide grants for arts therapy programs for children and adults with disabilities. The non-profit organization also puts on a festival that showcases more than 160 disabled performers every May at Wonderland Mall in Livonia.

But no matter which food booth you choose, you'll feel good about buying that sticky, gooey cotton candy because a portion of the proceeds will go to charities.

Quaint

"Art in the Village is a little more quaint than the other fairs I've been to and the buildings will be open for tours," said Stephanie Skaggs, the Livonia Arts Commissioner who chairs the festival. "I think it's going to be a good show. Half of the artists are new this year so the public will see a lot of new work - acrylic, watercolor, pen and pencil, landscapes, por-

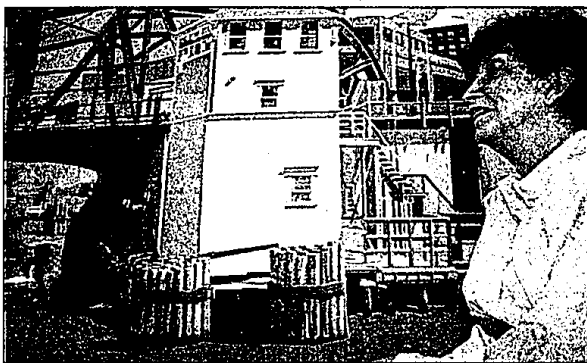
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Mother nature: Kathy Sandberg, a Plymouth potter, uses natural materials to create figurative wall art.

THROUGH THE YEARS

Livonia Arts Commissioners take turn showing work



STAFF PHOTO BY HEATHER SONNAT

Looking back: Electra Stamelos was one of the original members who founded the Livonia Arts Commission back in 1974. Here Stamelos admires her painting, "What's a Mute Swan Doing in Chicago."

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Electra Stamelos expresses herself as colorfully in words as in paint when she talks about the founding of the Livonia Arts Commission in 1974. Standing alongside one of her large-scale works at a gathering of former Livonia Arts Commissioners, Stamelos vividly recalls then Livonia Mayor Edward McNamara calling her into his office to ask her to join the historical commission.

Even though Stamelos had been working to save Wilson Barn, she declined the appointment suggesting instead that McNamara create an arts commission to raise money to help save the barn, and transform it into artist studios and a gallery. Weeks later, he gave her the green light.

"I felt very strongly we were a bedroom community and needed some culture and couldn't find it here," said Stamelos. "No one I talked to here had even been to the DIA. That pushed me to try to help save the barn."

Originally 17 artists were set to have their studios and a gallery there. But the city had other plans, and the studios and gallery were never created.

Cultivating arts

Disappointed but undaunted, Stamelos, along with that first group of commissioners, set out to develop a following for arts and culture in the community.

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Through the years: Jo Griffing Witt (left), Barbara Stewart, Electra Stamelos, and Billie Thompson are among the artists exhibiting in a show featuring past and present Livonia Arts Commissioners.

ty. Their debut project turned city hall grounds into an arts and crafts fair.

"To me it was an exciting time to put on the very first arts and craft festival at city hall," said Jo Griffing-Witt who was appointed to the arts commission in 1975, and served through the 1980s. "It's really grown since then and there's now 170 exhibitors. We were all involved with going through and selecting the artists' work. You attend a lot of meetings. It takes a lot of time."

But Griffing-Witt would do it all over again. She's never regretted joining the commission.

Artists Through the Years

What: A collection of works by past and present Livonia Arts Commissioners
When: Through Tuesday, July 31
Where: Fine Arts Gallery in the Livonia Civic Center Library, 32777 Five Mile Road, east of Farmington Road. For information, call Livonia's community resources department, (734) 466-2536

after Stamelos suggested it while the two were taking a ceramic class together. She wishes other artists had felt the same.

"We had trouble finding artists to volunteer their time to serve on the commission," said Griffing-Witt. "They just wanted to paint. I

Please see YEARS, C2

Jazz quartet celebrates Father's Day benefit brunch

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Paul Keller expects "Daddy's Little Girl" to be one of the tunes he'll be playing for the Father's Day Jazz Brunch at Schoolcraft College in Livonia. It's a special occasion for the musicians in the Keller/Kocher Quartet. All are first-time fathers and still enjoying all the experiences that go with being a parent.

Keller doesn't seem to care that his new daughter Leah is screaming in the background during a phone interview. He likes his new gig as a father. Besides, his wife Michelle is there to take care of their 4-month-old little girl.

"It's the first gig all of our entire families will be there," said Keller about the annual brunch to benefit the Michigan Jazz Festival (Sunday, July 15 at Schoolcraft College in Livonia). "It's a good family event. It's not smoky. There's good friends, good food and good music. She'll be going to lots of music events. She's going to get more music than most kids."

As will Cary Kocher's 3-week-old daughter Ella, and Pete Siers (drums) and pianist Phil Kelly's toddlers Charlie and Evan.

"It's a lot of fun even in the midst of all the screaming," said Keller who works a lot of late nights and weekends. He

returned the day before from playing a jazz festival in California only to play a steady Monday night gig at the Bird of Paradise in Ann Arbor. On Wednesday evenings Keller leads the house orchestra at the Bird of Paradise. Keller doesn't know if Leah will want to follow in his footsteps as a musician as long as she realizes the road can be grueling.

Boogie woogie beginnings

"I started playing boogie woogie bass line and was hooked," said Keller who picked up the string bass at 12 years old and played jazz and classical music all through junior high and high school in East Grand Rapids. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in performance from the University of Michigan School of Music in Ann Arbor where he now teaches.

"I met Cary in high school. We played in the Grand Rapids Youth Symphony together. In 1988, we formed the quartet which has regularly appeared at most of the festivals in the area."

Before they started the quartet, Keller took a five-night-a-week gig with Bennie Carew and John Shea.

"I was surrounded by jazz musicians," said Keller. "It became my jazz college playing with Bennie Carew and John Shea. I learned a lot from them, the reper-

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First-time dads: Keller/Kocher Quartet members Phil Kelly (left to right), Cary Kocher, Pete Siers and Paul Keller plan to bring their families to the Father's Day Jazz Brunch to benefit the Michigan Jazz Festival.

CONCERT

Show choir puts on polish for 'A Night with the Stars'

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Alana Arsenault works the front line of the Rising Star Singers like a pro. One of 16 young vocalists in a show choir founded by Norma Atwood, Arsenault moves to the music like she's been performing for years. That's quite a trick at age 7. However, she's not alone. All of these rising stars shine from the polish they receive during weekly rehearsals with Atwood at Village Music in Plymouth.

This final run-through is in preparation for a Tuesday, June 5 concert in the Plymouth Canton High School Little Theatre. "A Night With the Stars" will showcase not only group but solo vocal performances. "I like the dancing," said Arsenault, a student at Iabister Elementary in Plymouth. "You never know the kind of moves you're going to get."

Atwood choreographed the majority of the numbers



PHOTO BY PAUL EVANSKY

Broadway bound: Rising Star Singers Ashley Goachee (left to right), Alana Arsenault, Lauren Maslyk, Grace Griffin, and Katie Griffin rehearse like they're preparing for Broadway instead of a Canton concert.

on the program, except for "Footloose." Chad Gearig, a professional dancer, set the steps for this high-energy number.

"I liked working with the choreographer," said Allison Kirby, an 11-year-old student at Fiegel Elementary. Kirby takes private voice lessons with Atwood at Village Music. She'll also sing a solo, "So Emotional" by Christina Aguilera. "I'm really looking forward to performing 'Footloose' on stage. I'm not nervous about it because we sang at Domino's farm at Christmastime, but I get embarrassed dancing the solo in it."

A Night with the Stars

What: Rising Star Singers shine in a Broadway-like program
When: 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 5
Where: Plymouth Canton High School Little Theatre, Joy and Canton Center roads, Canton
Tickets: \$5, \$3 seniors/ages 5 and older, call (734) 354-8825

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