

Thursday, July 4, 2002

ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS



LINDA ANN CHOMIN

Polar Palooza unites artists, businesses

I guess by now it's no secret that I'm fond of polar bears and their new home at the Detroit Zoo. I'm not alone. When the call went out in May for artists to submit designs for a project that would put dozens of fiberglass bears on the streets of Royal Oak, 250 inquired and 120 drew up plans to paint and decorate the life-size forms.

Now the only problem is finding sponsors. Lisa Wisniewski of ArtServe Michigan is hoping that happens soon. The nonprofit organization coordinated the artist search, and now it's up to businesses, organizations, and interested groups, to lend a hand financially so that Polar Palooza is a success. So far 13 have signed up to support the zoo and artists.

Polar Palooza gives sponsors the kind of visibility a dollar amount can't be placed on, and lures visitors to the area. Chicago saw an extra \$200 million of spending in the Windy City after placing 320 cows on the streets in 1999.

"We were looking for designs that were the most fun, that were so cute they made you smile," said Wisniewski. "It had nothing to do with credentials. Fifty-nine artists were juried by a committee, families and students also submitted designs."

"I'm looking forward to seeing them. There are some abstract, some figurative, fabulous designs. I hope they get to be shown. From an artist's standpoint it's a great way to bring art into the community and to help artists get this exposure. Artists were chomping at the bit to do it and we'd like to be able to tell them they can."

Tom McGannon has his favorites resulting from the project that unites the Detroit Zoo, ArtServe Michigan, Detroit Metropolitan Convention & Visitors Bureau, and Downtown Royal Oak Association.

"ArtServe hosted the call for artists on-line and helped with jurying to lend expertise to the project," said McGannon of Eventures Unlimited which is organizing Polar Palooza. "Artists applied from Bay City to Canton. There's every kind of design. One of my favorites is of an upright bear in a tuxedo with a serving tray in one hand and a fish in another."

McGannon expects the bears to start showing up in mid-July but it depends on finding enough sponsors. He isn't worried even though the four Detroit-area project partners originally hoped to have up to 100 polar bears on the street and so far only 13 are spoken for.

Prop Art Studio in Detroit is molding bears that will be turned over to artists or whoever decides to paint them. The bears will remain on the streets until late fall when a gala auction will be held to benefit the zoo and the Downtown Royal Oak Association.

"Research shows that once bears start hitting the streets people want to sponsor one," said McGannon.

"There's incredible foot traffic and travel daily on the Woodward corridor. More than 200,000 come to the Royal Oak entertainment district every summer, and 1 1/2 million come through Royal Oak for Dream Cruise (Saturday, Aug. 17). The Detroit Zoo sees about one million summer guests."

"Sponsors can choose to create marketing oriented bears or choose from

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Testing the water: Like this polar bear in the Arctic Ring of Life at the Detroit Zoo, sponsors are waiting to see what the response to Polar Palooza will be before jumping in.



22nd Annual

Art in the Park

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Dianne Quinn's motto sure everyone has a good time at the 22nd annual Art in the Park Friday-Sunday, July 12-14. She's always cared about the artists and visitors coming to the extravaganza.

A long-time Plymouth resident, Quinn takes pride in the fair she founded. Each year she changes something to improve the experience. In 2001, Quinn added a complementary shuttle. This year she's setting up tables and chairs under The Gathering for people to rest or eat — or they can give a little of themselves at a bone marrow drive at the library. The Jaycees are currently raising funds to pay for testing.

"We'll have 420 artists over a 100 of them new, and the ones that are returning they know how competitive the market and do new super creative things," said Quinn.

"We began letting children exhibit in the park more than five-years ago."



This year we'll have 12 children around the fountain showing everything from clay to jewelry. It's a wonderful thing for children to be interested in and learn about. And I'm quite excited about the 1,000 children who will be visiting and painting a 12-foot

mural of the American flag that will then be placed in Plymouth City Hall.

"There's a variety of musical entertainment and art from contemporary to folk. Everything you'd ever want to furnish a home is here. I was thinking what fun it would be to go to Art in the Park to decorate your home. One of the things I care about is that people can find a small hand-carved butterfly or a cabinet or a stained glass window."

Karen O'Daniel's oil paintings would cheer up any room. Her Fruit Puns feature interesting combinations of vegetables and fruits, and people. O'Daniel received her degree at Kendall School of Design after graduating from Bloomfield Hills Andover High School. Although her work is on exhibit at the Plymouth Community Arts Council, this is her first art fair. The Plymouth resident was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis shortly after starting a career in advertising. But she's never let it stop her. This past year she taught art at Plymouth Salem High School and continues to teach adults at Summit on the Park Community Center in Canton.



Fruit puns: Karen O'Daniel paints whimsical works that are plays on words. This oil on canvas is titled "Banaknees."

"I'm a nervous wreck. Every day I say what can I paint today," said O'Daniel. "I have a background in visual display so I'm used to working with vegetables. How many real can you get with still life but the vegetables and fruits tend to get old really fast so you have to paint really fast."

It's obvious O'Daniel's humor has played a large part in helping her live with the disease.

"MS has led my life since age 25. It directs me to stay away from 12-hour days at advertising agencies and it's kept me on a path to be level headed and weigh out the consequences. Sometimes I think God I have it. It directed me in a positive way. I like to say, I may have MS, but

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Fun stuff: Pictured are works by two of the 420-artists exhibiting in Plymouth. Nina Cambron fused glass to create "Green Face" (upper left). Debra Metter designed this jacket and purse from unusual materials.

Art fair fun for kids too

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
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Whether they're just visiting or exhibiting kids can have fun at Art in the Park. Last year sisters Natalie and Emily Colletti of Livonia teamed up with friends to show their work. This time they'll display their keepsake boxes and bookmarks together.

"We're painting cigar boxes with velvet linings. We went to stores and asked for boxes," said Emily, a 10-year-old student at Hull Elementary. "Last year it was fun and we made a little money."

While Emily likes to draw, big sister Natalie enjoys doing anything in art. The 13-year-old is a student at Frost Middle School.

"It's a lot of fun making crafts and hanging out with friends," said Natalie. "We made \$50 with clothespins last year. It's a cool way to make money."

Megan Wakar's been making a few extra bucks in the art fair since she was 7- or 8-years old. The 14-year-old Canton resident will be a student at the new Plymouth High School in fall. But money isn't the only reason Wakar exhibits her polymer clay miniatures. She loves art and is thinking about going on to study art after graduating from high school. But before she does Wakar continues selling her miniature turtles, frogs, elephants, hippos, penguins, and lady bugs along with necklaces featuring the heads of animals at Art in the Park and in the children's section of the Detroit Festival of the Arts in September.

She began making them a couple of months ago and works every night to build her stock. It seems talent runs in the family. Her father Ted is a world champion ice carver.

"The animals are for the kids. The little kids come up with a couple bucks and buy them," said Wakar. "Parents buy them for their kids."

"I like being at Art in the Park in Plymouth because it's really big and I like walking around and there's lots to do."

FILM

On the big screen

Former residents make good in Hollywood

BY CINDI COOK
SPECIAL WRITER

It's not every day that a film captivates, entrances, and entices with such vigor.

Take *Love and Loathing at the Ass Lamp Lounge* for instance.

Yes, a romantic title indeed, just trips off the tongue it does — at least off that of producer Bob Cicchini, local Redford boy who has made very good in a town where fame and fortune are very hard won, even for the most bombshell of blondes and biggest of networkers.

Cicchini bills his film as "a slice of life romantic comedy, which features an array of colorful, oddball characters and humorous situations along the way."

The catchy title arose as a result of the quasi-burlesque lamps obtained by the set designer for the club in which the main characters meet, the base of each consisting of the hips, buttocks and legs of a woman in fishnet stockings and character shoes.

The premise: Therapist Marc Statton (played by Cicchini) meets actress Jane Hamilton at their neighborhood watering hole one evening while out on the town. After flirting heavily, as any self-respecting young stud would, he misses the mark until a few days later when they meet again, this time on top



In Hollywood: Director Mike Andrews and actor-producer Bob Cicchini work on a scene from their film, *Love and Loathing at the Ass Lamp Lounge*.

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