# Festival celebrates its history

BY LINDA ANN CHOMIN
STAFF WRITER

Don't be surprised by the huge apple walking the streets in Rochester Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 7-8. It's all part of Ann Burns' plan to draw a link between the Art & Apples Festival and Paint Creek Center for the Arts with a little help from Rochester College theater students.

Not many people know the financially successful event made the opening of the nonprofit arts center possible in 1982. This year more than 300 artists show everything from painting and sculpture to glass and clay in the festival.

"We want to get the connection going," said Burns, special events coordinator at Paint Creek Center for the Arts. This is Burns' second year as festival director. "Art & Apples is our primary fundraiser and our heritage.

"We've opened the arts center this year and turned it into Kids Central with projects like bubble wands and coloring a mask. Food vendors will also be there and the award winning Rochester High School Robotics Team will demonstrate a computer that walks. There will be a 1943 fire truck for kids to explore, pottery wheel demonstrations, and parents will be able to get children's *ID* cards."

On the festival grounds, 15 nonprofit vendors offer a variety of food including homemade apple pies by the Older Persons Commission on Saturday and Boy Scout Troop #125 on Sunday. On Sunday from noon to 4 p.m. Chef Keith Famie and Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson dish up delights at the Community House on Ludlow for the newest nonprofit vendor, The Rainbow Connection.

New this year is a gourmet breakfast 8-10 a.m. Saturday at The Community House to unite artists and festival visitors. Tickets are $20.

"They'll be able to get into the festival early," said Burns. "We're looking at other festivals across the country and this is what they're doing to get momentum going early. You can meet the artists. What a positive way to start it off right."

Redford photographer William Thayer is sure to talk about his art. Thayer brings all new pin hole photography to the festival after shooting the sights in Venice, Belgium and Paris last fall. This year Thayer's shown his images in a number of cities including St. Louis, Missouri, Kansas City and Arts, Beats & Eats in Pontiac.

"It's done with handmade cameras, a box with a pin hole in it and film in the back," said Thayer. "Lots of kids remember them from experiments in science class. It creates wide angle images with a totally unique perspective. They're all in black and white. It's a surreal image."

Russell Cobane's art couldn't be any more realistic and in fact has been mistaken for photography. The Clarkston painter captures songbirds, hummingbirds, nature, and wildlife in *acrylics*. For a bird's eye view, visit the Web site at www.cobanestudio.com. After graduating from Center for Creative Studies, Cobane worked as a commercial illustrator for 25 years.

"People think it looks like photographs because of the realism," said Cobane. "It's very realistic. They can look at it and make out what it is."

Festival visitors won't mistake Jim Sylvester's work for anything but what it is — quality handcrafted wood hutches, shelves and mirrors. Sylvester was a shop teacher in Utica schools before becoming a counselor at Schoolcraft College in Livonia in 1967. He's one of four artists who've shown in Art & Apples since the first one was held in 1965. On Wednesday, he and Sam Sottile and Wayne Andrews will start marking out the park and then will pound in numbered stakes to indicate the location of artists.

Sylvester remembers the early years when the festival was so small Margaret Glinke used to jury the show in her basement. Four of the originals artists – Glinke, Sylvester, Andrews, and Sottile, served on the Rochester Arts Commission which was established to oversee the festival in 1964. Once Paint Creek Center for the Arts opened in the old Avon Township Hall in the early 1980s, the commission ceased to exist and the PCCA took over as Art & Apples organizers.

"Back then it wasn't nearly as sophisticated," said Sylvester. "We did this little art show that kept growing and growing and growing and just kind of exploded. We went from exhibiting under rag tag parachutes under trees to renting tents for $10,000 a year. We moved from the park to the street and back again. When you have dreams. Incredible things happen."

Wayne Andrews, a Rochester clay artist, couldn't agree more. Like Sylvester he remembers the early years when Dr. Jack Solverson served as chairman of the festival. Andrews has been exhibiting in art shows since the early 1960s and did the granddaddy of them all — the Ann Arbor Arts Fairs — for 14 years. In addition to showing wheel thrown and hand built pottery in earthen tones, Andrews will sing with Heart of the Hills, a barbershop chorus, 10 a.m. to noon Saturday.

"We used to rent big circus-like tents now everyone has their own tents," said Andrews. "We've come a long way. I think it's the best show in the state of Michigan today."

Heather Welch says that's due in part to the more than 1,000 volunteers. She coordinates the 400 who do everything from face painting to passing out programs. It's volunteerism that allowed the arts center to open for classes and exhibitions. She's especially excited about the expansion of the nonprofit organization as it celebrates its 20th anniversary. Volunteers manning an informational booth will tell about the project. The purchase of a house next door to the arts center will allow the staff to move the offices and expand classes and exhibitions in the arts center. A fundraiser to raffle a $2,000 off-road mountain bike and nine other adult and children's bikes will help raise money for the project. Tickets are $25. For more information, call the arts center at (248) 651-4110.

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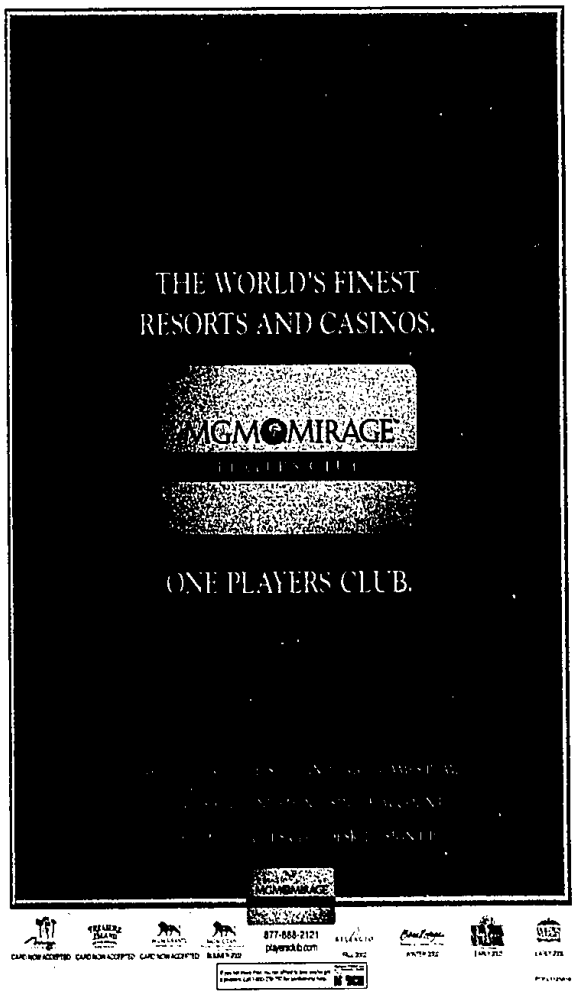
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