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Art House: A hidden gem in Northville

By Nathan Menoian

SPECIAL WRITER

The cultural diversity in Northville isn't as widely known as some would like. But that very well could be changing after this weekend's Arts & Acts celebration.

There will be plenty going on this weekend to convince art lovers and browsers that Northville knows how to put together an art festival highlighting a variety of styles and genres from Michigan artists.

This is the first year for the combined event that will include a shorts film festival, four short theatre plays, and more than 70 artists displaying and selling their art right in downtown Northville all weekend. And of course there will be a variety of area musicians performing and food.

Sue Taylor, chairperson for the Northville Arts Commission, knows the city is heaped with artistic talent and says that is part of its charm.

"This talent is like a hidden gem, but we don't want it hidden anymore," Taylor said.

Taylor enthusiastically points out that Northville really is a unique community with quite a bit of art choices within the city. Tipping Point Theatre is putting on the short plays this weekend, as well as regular monthly performances of bigger productions. The Marquis Theatre stages performances for children, and there are numerous dance centers, as well as a small movie theater featuring live theatre and film.

And because of the efforts of an army of volunteers and dedicated professionals, the Art House is there for the community, young and old.

"We're trying something new, with this celebration of the arts," Taylor said. "Our major fund-raiser is Arts & Acts this weekend. Any proceeds from the event directly benefit the Art House, but also benefit the community by providing them many, many cultural activities."

At the Art House there are visual exhibits and a small store that houses the work of 40 local artists, primarily from metro Detroit.

Art classes for both children and adults are offered there. Taylor said they've had many lecture series held there as well.

For those interested in holding an event at the Art House, the lower gallery can be rented.

"We've hosted baby showers, bridal showers, business meetings, or meetings where people want to be in a creative environment, and birthday parties," Taylor said. "Call Joan Thomas, our office manager, for details and cost, at 248-344-0497."

The Art House is located at 215 W. Cady Street and is a facility of the Northville Arts Commission.

Admission to Art House shows is always free and open to the public

“It’s basically that we try to be self-sustaining. But we still need to do fund-raising, as we maintain a small, part-time staff, pay utilities and insurance bills like everyone else.”

In March 2005 the Art House held its official opening. Two years prior to that a business plan was submitted to the Northville city council for approval to buy a city-owned building and turn it into a cultural arts center. Within the year, approval was granted to move in and a six-month renovation project began.

What Taylor likes most in her work as art commission chairperson is the excitement and appreciation from people when they discover how much the Art House offers the community.

“Even before the Art House, we created a student art show. We also partnered with the high school and middle schools, and when we acquired the Art House, we started having their art shown there and in some of the local galleries.

Since the Art House became willing to lend opportunity to budding artists, high school teachers asked the Art Commission if it would consider hosting the more advanced high school senior art students.

Taylor said those advanced seniors are now putting on a show once a year. One was held last month, and the students put on the exhibition, planned the food, hung the artwork, and gained valuable gallery experience. There were over 200 visitors.

“Art can really touch lives. That’s why having a community Art House is nice,” Taylor said.

Artists involved with this weekend’s Arts & Acts paid a one-time booth fee to set up their tent on the street. People who go to art fairs know the basic venues, Taylor said. The artists will be in downtown Northville along Main and Centre Street. There is no entrance fee into the art fair.

There will be some activities for children, and it’s designed to be a family-friendly event, according to Taylor. This is the 22nd year for the art fair, but the first time it’s been combined into one big event with film and stage plays.

The Art House website is www.northvillearts.org.

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