

Greenwood festival highlights art in all its forms

**By Ryan Trares**

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Most weekends, Cathy Claycomb has to pack up her car and travel across central Indiana to sell her art.

She crates up her handcrafted glass sculpture — carefully wrapped to prevent breaking during the ride — and drives to the nearest art show.

The only way to get her name out and find potential customers used to be to drive to fairs in Zionsville or Carmel or even outside Indiana altogether.

But since the WAMM Fest started in Greenwood, the southside artist finally has a venue just a few miles from her house.

Now in its third year, WAMM Fest has helped cultivate the creative community in Greenwood and on the southside, Claycomb and other local artists said. With painters, potters, poets, dancers and more, the event has put a spotlight on the arts and filled what was previously a void in the community.

“WAMM” stands for wine, art, music and microbrews, the four pillars that the festival is built on. While wine and beer vendors serve long lines of customers, and crowds flock to the stages to hear local bands, the art section is a key part of the event, organizer Joyce Nies said.

“There really isn’t any other festival in this part of Indianapolis that really fosters the arts in all mediums. The dancing, the music and visual artists; this is one of the only places the community can experience all sides together in one place,” she said.

The show brings in artists from across the Midwest and isn’t restricted to the Indianapolis area. But organizers have made it a priority to get local painters, sculptors and crafters to enter the event.

Sertoma members have attended local shows, including the Talbot Street Art Fair and Broad Ripple Art

Fair, to pass out information and fliers to the artists encouraging them to sign up.

Art chairman Dave Wolf worked with the Southside Art League and the Plein Aire Society of Indiana to garner interest, as well.

Most area shows tend to be focused on the north side of the metro area, in cities such as Carmel, Fishers and Zionsville, Nies said.

Until WAMM Fest was founded in 2009, Greenwood artists had almost no opportunity to sell their art in their own community.

From her garage studio, Claycomb fires glass and fuses it into unique abstract creations. Waves of colored glass blend into each other, with swirls of yellow or orange standing out among the darker blues, greens and browns.

She has been involved with the festival since it started. She helped organizers lay out the artist application process to ensure the show attracted professional artists, not just weekend crafters.

At the same time, it was important to make sure the local art community felt comfortable getting involved as well, she said.

Other artists have taken advantage of the show, even if they don't always feel art is the primary focus.

Larry and Suzanne Wayman will attend the festival for the second straight year. Their twisted wire bracelets, rings, chokers and other jewelry are adorned with semiprecious stones such as agate and amethyst.

Bands, beer and wine tend to make for more of a party atmosphere than an art show, Larry Wayman said. The artwork tends to get lost in the shuffle sometimes.

Last year, the couple sold just enough jewelry to cover the expenses of renting a booth and bringing their work down to the festival.

But at the same time, having a show nearby their southside home was important.

"It's not always the best market, but sometimes it's good to get out in the community anyway," Larry Wayman said.

The Greater Greenwood Arts Council, a group dedicated to increasing the visibility of arts in the area, is not directly involved with the planning of WAMM Fest.

But its members have benefited from the exposure they're given each year at the event, council president Jim Stockman said.

"Coming out and seeing what people are doing, both in the craft arts and the performing arts, it helps improve your appreciation for everything you see," he said. "The more you get these creations out in the public, the better."

The number of participating artists has stayed steady at around 50 each year, Wolf said. But more Greenwood and southside entrants have signed on, from just two the first year to close to 10 this time around.

Barb Olmstead, an interior designer for Cornerstone Interiors in Greenwood, will show her own oil paintings and acrylic works this year.

The fact that WAMM Fest is here in her own community made it an ideal place to be her first art show.

“This is something that was very much needed in Greenwood, and I think Greenwood should be doing a lot more of it,” she said. “This event is a good start, but I wish there were more out there.”

Photo Caption: Most weekends, Cathy Claycomb has to pack up her car and travel across central Indiana to sell her art.

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