

Brandywine

Festival of the Arts

August 23, 2010

CONTACT: Ed Weirauch, 302-528-8847 edweirauch@earthlink.net

For local artists, Festival has a 'huge' impact

When the Brandywine Arts Festival did not materialize last year, the sagging economy drooped even further for local artists. For some, the event had generated as much as one-quarter of their annual income; for others, the Festival was so "huge" numbers couldn't even be quantified.

Artist Larry Anderson, known for his paintings of Delaware landmarks, had exhibited at the Brandywine Festival for the last 15 years, and says it provided his third quarter income.

"Even beyond the money, that event allows us as artists to see and interact with our patrons, to catch up and certainly exchange ideas," Anderson says. "I feed off that show."

'That show,' now known as the Brandywine Festival of the Arts (BFA), returns to Brandywine Park in Wilmington the weekend of September 11 and 12 in the area across from the Brandywine Zoo.

Jeweler Olga Ganoudis attributes her success in part to the Festival. Twenty years ago she was working in an office and making jewelry on the side. "People saw my work at the Festival and I grew from there, within a few years I was able to make a living from my jewelry alone," Ganoudis says.

The Brandywine Festival of the Arts has been resurrected this year by local art aficionado Barry Schlecker. "This event represents \$1 million in business between the artists and their customers, food and refreshments, music, local hotels, restaurants and even gas stations. Exhibitors are coming from 14 states and Canada and the economic impact is significant."

It's significant all right, for Maryland nature photographer Sam Pathi. Having exhibited for 15 years, he says this show is "huge, huge, no doubt one of the biggest!"

Pathi and Anderson say that when there was no Festival last year, they sorely missed the interaction with their customers. "People called and wrote to me asking 'why?' and 'where else can I come see you,'" Pathi recalls.

Even with the buying and selling, artists say the Brandywine Festival provides an atmosphere that fuels their creativity.

“We count on events like this to fund and generate new projects which enable us as artists to keep up with the question we often hear... ‘what’s new?’” Anderson says. Conversation then jogs ideas and a new painting is born, he says.

“BFA is like a right of passage from summer to fall and a big reunion for the area's population. There's a heck of a lot more business done in that event than art including business deals done between attendees.”

#