

Artists flock to exhibit — naturally

Scarborough Arts Council heads up annual arts and crafts show this weekend

By MARIA TZAVARAS
Special to The Mirror

It's that time of year again when artists and art lovers alike get together for a weekend of fun, festivities and a massive exhibit of unique art.

Art Naturally, an arts and crafts show, is a yearly event held by the Scarborough Arts Council (SAC).

Allena Litherland, producer of Art Naturally, said the event, which has been compared to the One of a Kind show, has grown considerably since its conception in 1984. She said over the years it has evolved from a small art show, to being an event with a multitude of activities including artists who display and sell their art.

Every year the goal is to make the event bigger, she said.

"What I try to do each year is just add something to that whole festival atmosphere, by adding events and activities," Litherland said.

This year the free weekend arts festival will be at the Guild Inn Gardens and will have more than 90 artists from all over Ontario, as well as Montreal, exhibiting and selling their work.

The event boasts eight stage performers this year, including musician

Steve Goldberger performing jazz and blues and a new group called Next Day, which features three young vocalists from Port Hope. In addition, there will be continuous on-site activities, like Sunshine the Clown and a Kidz' Korner, where children can participate in activities such as storytelling, crafts and face-painting. Litherland said the art festival offers something for everyone.

"It's a family-oriented event in a beautiful setting," Litherland said. "It's a great afternoon to come on down to enjoy the park itself, the quality of art, and the number and variety of the pieces being made available to the public."

Litherland also said the art on display and for sale include everything from ceramics, photography, stain glass, pottery and paintings. She also said along with the artists who come back year after year there will be about 30 new artists who've never exhibited at Art Naturally before, providing many new items for people to see and buy.

"It's really nice to see new artists out," Litherland said. "It keeps that word of mouth going, and people say, 'Oh I went to the Art Naturally show and I did so well, and I got a lot of new

clients and customers.' It really opens up doors for people."

Litherland said the purpose of Art Naturally is multi-fold. It provides opportunities for artists in the community and it allows the public to see some original handmade artwork.

"They're getting unique items that they're not going to see everywhere they go, and they're getting things for a fair price, the price range is incredible," Litherland said.

An example of artwork that's unique and on the edge would describe Kathy and Jim Sawada's woodwork.

This year will be the fourth time they bring their wares to the show. Since the couple first exhibited at Art Naturally, Kathy said her business has grown from a couple of items to a slew of different wood art.

Made from their studio at their Scarborough home, Kathy and Jim's woodwork art has done well at the arts show, and Kathy said, participating in Art Naturally has been good for their company both in the amount of sales and exposure.

"We've had call-backs from people who've bought from me at the Guild, who call and say, 'I'm looking for something to go with the bench I bought', so

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Artist Kathy Sawada puts the final touches on one of her pieces at her home Wednesday before this weekend's Art Naturally Exhibition at the Guild Inn.

Mirror photo/DAN PEARCE

Couple showcases woodworking wares

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in that way it's been nice," Kathy said.

With no prior training or experience, Kathy described her myriad of different wooden objects as positive, funky and fun, like her sculptured boxes that have a unique twist.

'Cheek to Cheek' is the name of one of her sculptured boxes that is not only creatively rounded, but also has compartments that open to store things.

'Something Fishy' and 'Bears with Kites' are just a few of the couple's benches which have puzzles built into their tops. The couple also makes mirrors painted with whimsical, fun pictures on the frames.

East York resident Marjolyn van der Hart will be showing her impressionist acrylic paintings at Art Naturally for the fifth year in a row. She's a full-time painter and her work depicts children, gardening and European Street scenes.

"I focus on times and places where we just relax and we find a place of peace," van der Hart said. She'll be bringing 50 new pieces from her collection including some from her recent trip

in the area that is accessible and enjoyable for people to come to. She also said, it's a great opportunity to show at a local event because people get to know you and follow your work.

"It's given me more access to people during the summer. Every year sales have increased and I always do very well there," van der Hart said.

If people come and visit her booth, she promises a real treat, as "there's just a real sense of peacefulness and beauty," to behold.

Art Naturally is this weekend at the Guild Inn Gardens, 201 Guildwood Pkwy.

It runs Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. For details, call 416-698-7322.