

Hundreds of volunteers make show happen



By Sooke News Mirror

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More than 60 community volunteers gathered at the Sooke Harbour House at the end of January to begin planning one of Sooke's biggest summer events, the 28th annual Sooke Fine Arts Show. The meeting kicked off the months of hard work that go into producing the 11-day art show and sale, which this year opens to the public July 25 through August 4 at SEAPARC.

The meeting drew together new and returning members of the Sooke Fine Arts Society, representing just a fraction of the more than 300 volunteers who pitch in to design, set up and operate the show.

Whether wielding hammers and paintbrushes, hanging art, preparing food for the hard-working crews or planning the many special events that take place during the show, volunteers learn and contribute a wide variety of skills; but for most, it was the sense of community and the friendships formed that draw them back year after year, as veteran volunteers shared their personal reasons for being a part of the show.

Camaraderie and a sense of family are strong behind the scenes, says the society's Executive Director, Catherine Keogan. "Many of our volunteers have been with us years, even decades," she notes, "and it's incredibly moving to hear how much this show has given them a sense of place in Sooke. Collaborations on this scale can really transform a community."

Highlights from the previous show were also shared, including record-breaking art submissions and an influx of new artists from across Vancouver Island and the coastal islands. A grant from the Rotary Club of Sooke made it possible to frame artwork by students from the Edward Milne Community School, which hangs in the show's bistro area. This year

students from Belmont Secondary and Journey Middle School are also invited to put work in the Youth Art Gallery.

The most exciting new developments announced, however, were the launch of a Youth Arts Scholarship for an EMCS student wishing to pursue studies in the visual arts, and the launch of the Artists in Class program, bringing some of the show's artists into EMCS classrooms for hands-on teaching.

The Sooke Fine Arts Show features roughly 375 works of art in a temporary gallery constructed inside the SEAPARC Leisure Complex. Works span the visual arts spectrum, including painting, sculpture, ceramics, glass, fibre, photography and jewellery. The show features daily artist demonstrations and talks, live music, as well as special events for children, youth and seniors.

Other notable events include the Purchaser's Preview gala evening, offering art lovers an early bird preview and first chance to buy the art on display. The Taste of Sooke features a wide selection of food and refreshments from local providers against a backdrop of live music in the gallery.

More than 8,000 visitors flock to the event, now in its 28th year, and it has become a mainstay of the Vancouver Island arts and culture scene, representing hundreds of regional artists.

Volunteers interested in helping out can contact Catherine Keogan or Britton Jacob-Schram at 250-642-7256 or sfas@sookefinearts.com. Details about the show, volunteering and the Sooke Fine Arts Society are available at www.sookefinearts.com.

Submissions are now being received online from practicing artists on Vancouver Island and the coastal islands. Submission accepted until June 7.

For more information on the process and the show, go to the Sooke Fine Arts website at: www.sookefinearts.com

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