

Where creativity, community comes together



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The Vaughn Shand Centre and the Hants County Arts Council have teamed up to make this year's Festival of Art bigger and better than ever before.

The 5th annual Festival of Art (FOA), held from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2, celebrates local art, trumpeting awareness, accessibility, participation and engagement in the arts, in conjunction with Culture Days.

The FOA, the HCAC's trademark annual event, is a huge contributor to the local culture scene. This year's festival will pay tribute to local artist David Howells' continued devotion to the arts with the presentation of the first HCAC Hall of Fame award.

Tacha Reed, president of the HCAC, said Howells was chosen because "... he is one of the founding members of the Arts Council and, since he has stepped down from the board to focus on his art, we have seen just how much work he actually did and it's taking a team to fill his shoes."

Reed says without Howells, the Festival of Art probably would not exist.

"He has done a lot of work to give us a voice."

Howells is one of the many artists that will be participating in the festival. Howells, whose work will also be displayed in October at the Public Archives in Halifax, speaks about the HCAC proudly, like a family.

"For me, personally, I think the greatest reward over the years has been watching a vision that started out as a simple idea become a reality," Howells said.

He hopes the festival will continue to grow and attract more attention and recognition for local artists.

This year, because of the increasing interest, the HCAC relocated from the Pisiquid Canoe Club to the newly renovated Vaughn Shand Centre.

"More than anything, we've gotten bigger," says Reed.

In need of more space to showcase art, the HCAC lucked out when they stumbled upon the soon to be open, Vaughn Shand Centre, located at 69 Cedar Street in Windsor. The centre is located in the former Hawboldt's Home Furniture building.

"It just screamed art gallery space," said Reed.

Streams of natural light combined with high ceilings and raw, unrefined wooden beams create an instant artistic appeal that, Reed says, will provide a rich viewing experience for all who attend.

The building was bought by German medical exercise specialist Matthias Jaepel, who will be reopening the building around October as a wellness centre.

April Griffin, the Vaughn Shand Centre's executive assistant, says Jaepel enjoys supporting community endeavours.

"He has always been a big supporter of the arts as well and this is part of what our... contribution and excitement is in offering the space."

The Vaughn Shand Centre's mission is to not only deliver health services, but also bring the community together through wellness — which includes supporting cultural events such as this.

"There is an amazing amount of talent here in the province and it really needs exposure," said Griffin.

The spacious building allows the HCAC to give more exposure to local artisans.

"I find a lot of people are taking advantage that the space is so big so they're working on bigger pieces to show them off," Reed said.

"They may have never had the chance to before."

Kelly Mitchelmore's bright, colourful pieces and Carlos Derosa's first-time nude displays are only a couple of examples of the work that will be on display.

Along with bigger pieces, this year's festival showcases a variety of mediums. Unlike in previous years where canvas art has defined about 90 per cent of the show, metal work artists such as Gerald Jank and Al Simm will have a chance to showcase their creations as well.

There is an amazing amount

The festival runs from Sept. 30 to Oct. 2. It will open with a wine reception at 7 p.m. Sept. 30, with musical entertainment by Stephen Rowe and Sharon Churchill, and snacks by Yum Bakery. HCAC member and artist Kelly Mitchelmore will be the guest speaker for the evening.

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“She is continually promoting the arts within the community,” said Reed. “She has an enthusiastic dedication to bridging the gap between artist and viewer.”

The festival continues on Oct. 1 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Oct. 2 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Reed will have her own Flying Cloud Boutique, a converted vintage airstream trailer, set up where artists will be providing demonstrations throughout the weekend.

“We’re just hoping that everyone will come out...and enjoy some art!”

The Festival of Art also serves as a way for the HCAC to raise funds for a permanent space where local art can always be on display.

“There are a lot of artists locally and a lot of them are kind of just trying to do things on their own,” Reed said.

“We want them to know that there is an art community here and we’re here to support each other.”

For more information on the Festival of Art, email hcacfestivalofart@gmail.com or visit www.hantscountyartscouncil.com.