

# Annual art shows capture attention

**BY BARBARA GREENBERG  
COMMERCIAL-NEWS**

April 27, 2007

DANVILLE — Young artists breathe new life into this year's art shows at Danville's Village Mall, while familiar names continue the standard of excellence that the Danville Art League has maintained since 1938.

The Art League and the Village Mall Merchants' Association sponsor the two shows that make up the annual event. Local artists' paintings, drawings, photos and sculpture are on display this weekend in the mall's Center Court. The Town and Country Amateur Art Show includes a junior division for those 18 and younger and another for adults.

Entries in the junior division outnumber those in the adult category. Students from first grade through high school submitted entries.

"The children's ideas are amazing," Becky Engel, co-chair of the Town and Country Show, said. "We have students who entered from Bismarck-Henning, Oakwood, St. Paul's and First Baptist.

"Danville (public) schools had their own show here last weekend, so they don't have anything entered in this one. I think it's too much work for the teachers to pack it all up and then bring it back for another show."

A group of women out shopping for the afternoon stopped and admired a photo of a waterfall by Lee Miller, a sophomore at First Baptist School.

"He captured it so perfectly," Jennifer Williams, one of the women, said. She, her mother and her sister were celebrating Williams'

birthday with a shopping trip.

"I'd like to see more art on display here in Danville," she said. "I'm not sure where — maybe downtown somewhere."

Mike Harper, an artist who's exhibited downtown in The Alley Gallery on North Vermilion Street entered three paintings in the show's Sharon Schmitz Regional Open Art Competition. According to organizers, his work caused a sensation during the art show's first hours.

Nancy Dyer, Art League president, said, "We were still setting up the show when people started asking about (Harper's) work. At least six people were interested in buying his paintings.

"His work is so unique. There's a definite appeal to younger people."

Mike Veseli stopped at the mall with his friend Jeremy Gaskill to pick up a prom tux. The two agreed one of Harper's paintings, a portrait of Frankenstein, caught their attention when they walked past it.

"That's very legit," Veseli said. "It's so creative. Even the frame ties in with the painting."

The Open Art Competition offers cash awards after a professional has judged the entries. This year's judge, Kelly White from Champaign, will critique the entries at 1:30 p.m. today. According to Art League members, the critiques can be valuable to any artist, not just the one being judged.

Sharon Schmitz, the woman whose name the competition now bears, was remembered by several of the Art League members for the critiques she gave. She began the Open Art show, and it was renamed in her honor after her recent death.

"We have two of her paintings on exhibit," Roberta Williams, co-chair

of the competition with Dyer, said.

"She was so much fun to have around," Dyer said.

Two friends shared that same spirit during a brief visit this week. They spent part of Friday at the mall and stopped at the art shows.

Thelma Taylor of Danville and her guest, Erin Ross from Gainesville, Fla., looked specifically for a painting by Freda Chaney, a friend of Taylor's. They were delighted by her "Springtime at the Cabin," a pastel-pencil drawing.

"Even the double mat is beautiful," Taylor said.

Ross said, "She (Taylor) has a good eye for art."

The two women hope to time their next visit for the weekend of Arts in the Park. That June event features a large display of visual arts as well as performances by local community theater groups in historic Lincoln Park.

## FYI

*The 2007 Town and Country Amateur Arts Show and the Sharon Schmitz Regional Open Art Competition continue today and Sunday in Center Court of the Village Mall during regular mall hours. The event is co-sponsored by the Danville Art League and the mall's Merchants' Association.*

Copyright 1999-2006 cnhi, inc.