

Embracing art for the joy it brings

Farmington Art Foundation wants to welcome new members to ranks

By Joanne Maliszewski
Staff Writer

You don't have to follow in the footsteps of Van Gogh, Miro or Monet. If you embrace art, are a beginner or a pro, the Farmington Art Foundation wants you. And you don't have to live in Farmington or Farmington Hills.

"We want more people," said foundation President Pat Langner. "As it's gone on, we are all getting older."

That doesn't mean that the 85 members are hanging up their brushes, they just want more company in the form of area residents 18 years of age and older to experience the joys of art. Current members hail from West Bloomfield, Livonia, Northville, Plymouth, Novi, Detroit, Walled Lake, Southfield and Redford.

The foundation was born of the 50-year-old Farmington

Artists Club, which had long been a mainstay in the Farmington and Farmington Hills communities. But about five or so years ago, tax law changed and creating a foundation for the artists was the best move, said Janet Hall, vice president and treasurer.

Residents may recognize the foundation's name because it had a gallery with artists rotating their works in the Village Mall in downtown Farmington within the past year.



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At the helm of the Farmington Art Foundation are top row from left, Ann Cleary, secretary; Pat Langner, president; and on the bottom from left are Janet Hall, vice president, and Mary Kehoe, vice president.

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Though the gallery — open for about four months — got foot traffic, "nobody really knew we were there. But we were so glad to show our work," said Mary Kehoe, also a foundation vice president.

To generate more interest in the art foundation, members a month ago sent out letters to private and public school art teachers with an invite to monthly meetings. "We really want people to find out about us."

Of course, many residents know the strength of arts in the Farmington area, but likely don't realize the art foundation

is the moving force. For decades now, senior adults have taken classes through the foundation at the Costick Center. The foundation provides all materials except canvas and paper.

"We've had lots of people come to the classes," said Ann Cleary, foundation public relations chair, as well as a mover and shaker in Art Smart.

In fact, if you have ever heard of the "Picture Lady Program" that began in 1974 at Longacre Elementary, thank the Farmington Artists Club — the Farmington Art Foundation. Today, some 500 art prints are available for use by schools in the area.

"It is designed to introduce art to the chil-

dren. We coordinate it in the schools and we have descriptions about the artists," Langner said.

Kehoe, a retired art teacher, stresses the importance of introducing art at a young age. "I taught the children to see — colors and what's going on in the paintings."

While foundation members are busy with Art Smart and the Costick Center classes, they are also wildly famous for the popular annual Festival of the Arts each spring in Farmington Hills. That's not to mention their works at the City Gallery in the Costick Center, as well as in the Farmington branch of the Farmington Community Library. Foundation artists' works are also on exhibit at Sellers

GMC Buick on Grand River, west of M-5.

Foundation members are working toward a Martin Luther King Jr. exhibit next February at the Hills library branch. In June, artists will be at the Heritage Park Nature Center painting a children's wall in the garden, Cleary said.

While membership is not limited to Farmington area residents, neither is the foundation's involvement. An 8-by-8-foot mural was recently installed in the Grand River Creative Corridor outdoor art gallery in Detroit.

The mural is painted on wood by Farmington Art Foundation artists Cathy Szumlinski of Walled Lake, Linda Pelowski of Farmington

Hills and Jan Corrigan of Farmington Hills. It depicts a colorful Detroit skyline and adds some brightness to a blighted area.

"The entire process took about three weeks of part-time painting by three artists," said Szumlinski. Mike Corrigan of Corrigan Moving Systems in Farmington Hills provided the artists a large space to work on the mural, while also delivering it to Detroit.

The foundation hosts monthly meetings at 6:45 p.m. the second Wednesday of every month at the Farmington Hills library branch, 32737 12 Mile. The meetings are in the upper auditorium. Meetings are September through May, excluding December.

Each meeting features a guest speaker who give insight on their particular expertise. You don't have to be a member of the foundation to stop in for the meetings.

If you ask the foundation's officers what's the best part of joining the group, they will undoubtedly say the friendships they have made. "It is fun hanging out with other artists. It helps you grow in your art," Langner said. "They love what you love."

For more information about the foundation, visit the website at www.farmingtonartfoundation.org

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