

NEWS: East Volusia

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Venetian Bay welcomes public

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NEW SMYRNA BEACH -- With a grandson on each arm, Jennifer Page strolled through the Venetian Bay Art Festival on Saturday, looking for special gifts.

"My daughter and son-in-law came here today to look at some of the models, as they are interested in purchasing a home here," she said. "I came along to take care of Scott and Cameron. What a surprise it was to find this wonderful arts and crafts fair.

"This is about the time of year I begin shopping for Christmas gifts for some of my good friends. I always try to find something just a little bit different. When you get to be as old as we are you usually have just about accumulated everything that you need. So now gift giving becomes a pleasant challenge. I've already picked out a few items. Now I have to decide between them."

The Johnson Group and Venetian Bay sponsored the all-day event at Venetian Bay's Town Center with more than 65 artists and crafters in attendance. The development's sales manager, Mary Ann Murray, was pleased with the turnout.

"We were looking for a way to introduce Venetian Bay to the public and the idea of an art show and fair came up," she said. "We ran it by Mr. (Jerry) Johnson, our developer, and he said to go with it . . . We are more than pleased how everything has turned out and we are now talking about making this a yearly event or even doing it twice a year."

Even though art sales were a little slow, most of the participating artists in the inaugural event had high praise for the show's venue.

"The organizers did a wonderful job of putting this show together and the setting is just beautiful," award-winning local artist Jenny Stine said. "You have beautiful lakes and magnificent fountains -- it's just a picture perfect setting."

Sandi Jackson of SandKat art said, "Sales are slow but that's normal for a first-time show. The quality of the art here today is outstanding and this is a perfect location for an art fair. When more and more people begin to occupy their homes here, future art shows and events will definitely be better."

Members of the Pelican Piecemakers quilting guild also were on hand to demonstrate the art of quilting by hand.

"We participate in various community service activities as well as appear at fairs and art shows demonstrating the art of quilting," the guild's president, Molly Phipps, said. "Through these venues we hope to keep alive and save the art of hand-quilting.

"We're a pretty active group. We currently have 69 members who reside from Oak Hill to Daytona Beach."

For anyone interested in hand quilting, the guild meets weekly from 9 a.m. to noon at American Legion Post 17, 619 W. Canal St.

With their artwork, students from Chisholm Elementary and Sacred Heart were raising funds for school projects.

The lakefront stage was the setting for live performances during the Festival. Performers included classical guitarist Jason Aldridge, followed by The Holy Smoke Band from Christ Community Church and the Imagine Dance Group.

Vendors offered a variety of hot and cold lunch items and snacks. Tables, chairs and park benches were situated around the Town Center.

"This was a real fun day. I really enjoyed it and so did my dog, JoJo," Susan Murray said. "I visited with some of my artist friends and just leisurely strolled with JoJo around the town square, taking in the exhibits and enjoying the entertainment."

