

Arts and Entertainment

Art and music groups join to raise funds

by Tunomukwathi Asino

The tough economy has affected individuals and businesses, and non-profit organizations are not immune from the dire economic situation. Some like the Art Alliance of Central Pennsylvania and the Nittany Valley Orchestra, are getting more innovative in their fundraising.

“Grants from private foundations and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts have been drastically cut for 2009-2010,” said Marie Doll, executive director of the Art Alliance. “Corporate, business, and individual sponsorships and contributions have declined by over 20 percent. This supplemental funding is vital to both organizations.”

“Our organizations also rely on donations from local businesses, as well as from individuals. Donations are down about 22 percent for the Nittany Valley Symphony,” Evelyn Kepler, first vice-president of the symphony board, added.

The result is a harder time for artists and performers to get their work in front of an

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--Marie Doll

audience.

“Well, from an artist's perspective, I know that part of what supports the Art Alliance is the percentage it receives on sales of artwork from shows held at or sponsored by the Art Alliance,” artist Karl Eric Leitzel said. “The recent economic slump made life harder for artists, but also for both non-profits and for-profit art galleries that rely on art sales.”

“Quite a few commercial galleries were

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This painting, called “A Collection of Pots by Scot Paterson,” a 2009 oil on canvas board by Karl Eric Leitzel, will be one of the many pieces exhibited at An Afternoon of Art and Music May 2.

Father, daughter take different approaches to art

by Veronica Winters

A father-daughter relationship is always a multifaceted and colorful one. A harmonic relationship between two artists—father and daughter is a mutual source for pride, care and endless creativity. While both artists paint on location somewhat similar representational landscapes, Susan Nicholas Gephart is a professional realist painter and her father is not.

Both artists picked up their pencils at the age of 12. Thomas Nicholas Jr. filled his sketchbook with quick studies of people when he was just 19 years old. He soon married and eventually had a family of six children to support.

“No artist could afford that,” Nicholas said.

Nicholas pursued a different career. Working at the Philadelphia electric power plant since he was 16, the artist at heart stayed at the plant, working as a chief electrician for 47 years until his retirement. On

In the studio

contrary to him, Susan Nicholas Gephart chose art as her ultimate career. She graduated with honors in 1977 and 1979, with an Associate in Art from Montgomery County Community College, and with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from The Pennsylvania State University. In 2007, Susan was inducted into The Montgomery County Community College Alumni Hall of Fame.

During warm months of the year, both artists paint outdoors at the farms and forests. Father and daughter feed on each other's creativity by painting realist landscapes in a single location with varied sensibilities. While Gephart paints impressionistically with broader strokes and vivid col-

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Photo by Veronica Winters
Outdoor artist Thomas Nicholas Jr. with his daughter and realist painter, Susan Nicholas Gephart.

Mom's day all year long



Photo by Linda Rohler

Volunteer Tom Cherry, right, assists Jordan Toronto with her microphone for a pilot episode of a talk show called "It's Been a Mom Day!" at the Spela Children's Store, 1464 Martin Street, State College. The show featured Jody Whipple, RD, LDN, and Dr. Rachel F. Love, a developmental psychologist at Midstep Centers for Child Development. Toronto, an actress and the mother of two, is a frequent contributor to Voices.

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unable to survive the slowdown and actually closed their doors," he added. "The good news is that, as the economy is gradually improving, sales of art have definitely been improving as well. The low point seemed to be late 2008 and the first half of 2009."

The Art Alliance and Nittany Valley Orchestra have teamed up for "An Afternoon of Art and Music" Sunday, May 2, from 2 to 4:30 p.m. at Foxdale Village, 500 E. Marylyn Ave. in State College. Tickets are \$20.

"By working together, organizers of the event think this allows them to maximize resources and publicity," Doll said. "At the same time, lovers of art and music will spend a delightful afternoon highlighting the best of both the symphony and the alliance."

The afternoon will include musical performances and talks by artists from the Art

Alliance. Then guests will go to the gallery to see an exhibit of work that won awards in Art Alliance shows. Refreshments will be served

The program features three ensembles from the symphony and three artists from the alliance, Leitzel, Laura Winn Kane and Ignacious Wentling, speaking about the inspiration for their work.

Doll said guests will be invited to tour the art gallery featuring award winning art from the alliance's 2008 and 2009 exhibitions.

Apart from performances, Nittany Valley Symphony conducts many fundraising activities throughout the year.

"This is our main source of revenue," said Kepler. "Tickets sales cover only about 8 percent of the cost of producing a concert."

Doll expressed appreciation for the Foxdale community that allowed them to use the auditorium without charge.

Tickets are available at the door or by calling (814) 234-2740 or (814) 231-8224.

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ors infinite vistas of trees, clouds, fields and skies, Nicholas focuses on old buildings, barns and scenic close up views with modest color range and somewhat conservative applications of pastel strokes.

"I experiment a lot in my painting. I usually paint with pastels and oils but I'm starting to use acrylic paint in my underpainting as well when I paint outdoors," Nicholas Gephart said.

Living in houses in Victorian Bellefonte right next door to each other, the artists love to share their studios with each other and Gephart's students, often painting indoors during cold season. Nicholas began painting with pastels in the '80s when his daughter introduced him to her favorite medium. He painted coastal scenes and other landscapes until moving to his current home about four years ago. The elderly artist is in his 80s. He has gone through several seri-

ous health problems and thus has limited mobility. Gephart helps her father to stay upbeat socially and enjoys bringing him to some artists' events and paint outs. Artists have exhibited their landscapes together on several occasions, entering juried shows and competitions. Moreover, SAMA gave the artists a two-person show and they also showed their work titled "Focus on landscape" on the Penn State campus last year.

Father and daughter find their inspiration in their own way. Nicholas enjoys riding his Mustang and a motorcycle, taking pictures along the way. In his "idea box" the artist stores his best 4 in. x 6 in. photographs that he uses painting with pastels in his studio. However, his daughter has a different approach to art-making. According to Gephart's artist statement, "I am responding to the sound, smell, and light of the environment where the essential elements of my paintings are color, shape, sense of atmosphere, and the emotion of the moment." The artist has an incredible skill with a strong

sense of balance, harmony and color in her artwork, filling her large canvases with air, sun and music.

The artist also successfully balances her domestic life with her creative side.

"I have three children who are 26, 21 and 19. Family is important to me and I always organize workshops and paint outs on the same dates for many years to plan around those days," she said.

Gephart has worked for more than two decades coordinating exhibits for the Bellefonte Historical and Cultural Association, served on the Board of Directors of the Art Alliance of Central Pennsylvania, donates to The Clearwater Conservancy, PAWS, and The Palmer Museum of Art. She is a member of Landscape Artists International, the Centre County Farmland Trust and the Farmland Preservation Artists, and is vice president of The Central Pennsylvania Pastel Society. She has taught in schools through the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, teaches

private lessons to children in her home studio, is an instructor for the C. Barton McCann School of Art, instructs oil and pastel painting for Rochester New York Art Supplies, and organizes artist retreats and workshops at Hameau Farm Studio in Belleville. She also sponsors a high school memorial scholarship each year, in honor of David M. Hopkins, fellow landscape painter and teacher. Gephart also participates each year in the Chincoteague Island Paint Out and Exhibit and in 2006 she became a certified instructor for Jack Richeson Art Supplies, as well as a product demonstrator for Gamblin Oils and Mediums. Her teaching schedule during summer includes the Hameau Farm Artist Retreat in Belleville, the art camp at the Millbrook Marsh Nature center, McCann School of Art, and so on. For more information about the artist and teaching schedule, go to www.snicholasart.com.

In the Studio is a new column by local artist Veronica Winters.

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Dancing for Haitian relief



Photo provided

Children from Happy Valley Chinese School performed at State College's charitable concert "Music of Love" March 20 at the State College Area High School South Building. The concert was organized to benefit Haitians affected by the earthquake. "The goal was to strengthen togetherness and to share hope and love with the people in need," said Hsin-Ling Tsai, media coordinator of the concert and a graduate student at Penn State. Approximately 400 people attended.