

Saturday Market moves indoors

Crafts will be sold indoors for holidays

By Hon Walker
Emerald Associate Editor

Most of the products are the same, the booths are the same, and the smells and sounds are the same, but the ambience is a bit different as Saturday Market has moved indoors with its Holiday Market.

For anyone wishing to avoid the polished and sterile environment of a shopping mall, yet stay out of the rain, the Holiday Market may be the solution.

The Holiday Market opened Friday and will be open for the next four weekends. Most of the craft vendors are local and most of them are regulars at Saturday Market, which began in 1970 and operates from April to December.

Instead of setting up their booths on the downtown park blocks at Eighth Avenue and Oak Street, the vendors operate from the Wheeler Pavilion, auditorium and courtyard at the Lane County Fairgrounds, 796 W. 13th Ave.

White walls, a shiny floor and a protective roof are the most apparent differences. Ceramics, jewelry and artwork

abound. International cuisine and hourly entertainment still can be found, as can \$15 tarot readings, racks of tie-dyed fabric, bulk incense and the "world's greatest" joke books.

Robb Bokich has sold Robb's Pillow Furniture from Saturday Market for 16 years. He said the market has tried a number of strategies to attract customers during the pre-Christmas season.

Keeping the downtown booths open through December didn't work. Customers just didn't frequent an outdoor market in cold and rainy weather the way they did during the summer, he said.

Putting canopies over walkways and booths didn't work either. After one heavy snowfall, the awning over Bokich's booth caved in.

"The furniture was not really hurt, but it was a real hassle," he said. Being protected from the elements has benefited him and his customers.

Though business was slow during the post-Thanksgiving weekend, he said, he was confident it would pick up as Christmas drew nearer.

Bokich said the number of

browsers and customers was larger because the market was indoors.

"We get all the old people, but we also get a lot of new people who wouldn't consider going out in the rain," he said.

Bill Goldsmith, University graduate student and Saturday Market general manager, strolled among the colorful booths and explained how the indoor market was similar to the traditional Saturday Market.

"Most of the people are the same people you see on the park blocks every week. They are doing commerce in a non-commercial environment," Goldsmith said.

"It's nicer to be inside during December, and it's much nicer for our customers. It's not quite as exciting, though."

Holiday Market is an opportunity for customers to find handmade Christmas gifts, Goldsmith said.

"The people who come here are the people who have an appreciation for buying and giving something that is one-of-a-kind. People care about what's

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