

Currents

Navigating the Arts and Music of The Valley

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(Photo by Darcy Wallace, Illinois Valley News)

Artists and admirers congregated in Kerby for the season kick-off of the Southern Oregon Guild for Artists and Artisans. The event was held in Kerby at the Belt Building Friday, May 27.

Spring has sprung at the guild

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

Striking photography, detailed paintings and ingenious creations lined the walls and windows of the Kerby Belt Building during the Southern Oregon Guild's new Spring Show Friday, May 27.

Friday's opening reception introduced guests to a variety of new and returning artists' work, kicking off Memorial Day weekend with the opening reception of the Guild Gallery's newest showing, scheduled to display from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Guests enjoyed hors d'oeuvres and light beverages and had the chance to meet many of the artists themselves.

Displays included tapestries and figurines made from alpaca fiber, photography by retired teacher Jim Lettis, stunning black-and-white photography by Anita Savio and three-dimensional work from artisans Cedar Wazell and Roxanne Hunnicutt, to name just a few.

One enjoyable fiber tapestry, "Global Warming" by Jeff Merrifield, was created using 'wet' and 'needle' felt techniques to portray penguins surfing, climbing palm trees and hitting the beach — perhaps a lighter take on a grave scenario.

Ruth Wendover also displayed new tables during the event, and Jean Robertson's jewelry crafted from re-purposed electrical parts sparked interest for Spring Show guests.

Artists Alan Laurie, Bea Thompson and Katherine Tilton helped usher in summer (despite recent inclement weather) with vibrant colors of oil paintings, watercolors and haute

couture, respectively.

Guild members Linda Stevenson and Guild board director Anita Savio curated the show, while a core group of members, including Merrifield, Joyce Abrams, Andy Mechling and Sandy Miller, played a major role bringing things together.

Guild founder Jerry Work said he formed the Guild eight years ago to help provide incentive for Southern Oregon artists to communicate their work through any media, if they wish to do so.

"We don't have enough of an indigenous market here to support very many artists and artisans on a full-time basis," Work said. "[They] had to reach out. They didn't know how and didn't know where to turn to do that. So the Southern Oregon Guild was formed for the specific purpose of helping artists and artisans learn how to become commercially more successful. And that was the genesis for all of this."

There is no shortage of artists or talent in the Valley, or in the rest of Southern Oregon. The challenge, Work said, is making their work look as stunning in a photograph as it looks in person.

"What was most needed was access to professional photographic equipment so people could learn to take professional-quality pictures of their work," Work said. "That's absolutely mandatory. You can't even think about getting juried into a show if you just have snapshots you're sending out."

According to Work, the unique relationship between the Guild and Rogue Community College supports the non-profit Guild while



(Photo by Darcy Wallace, Illinois Valley News)

Sharon and Jerry Works caught having fun in Kerby May 27.

running a for-profit gallery for the artists themselves.

Work said his wife Sharon gathered the funds for remodeling within the Kerby Belt Building that could be used as a special events center for artists when they needed it.

"The idea was whenever [the events center] was not being used by the college, everything on display would be put on wheeled carts I built so it could expand out into this space; but it could also contract back into this space when the event center was needed for something else," Work said.

"That started what I think is a totally unique situation where there is a nonprofit

organization operating a for-profit cooperative gallery inside a community college building," Work continued. "I don't think that's done anywhere else in the country."

Running the Guild is a full-time job, with volunteers doing everything from show prep to staffing the Gallery five days a week, providing security, accounting sales and distributing funds to artists.

"You provide a vehicle for [artists] to motivate themselves," Work said. "All the help in the world can come from a group of very talented volunteers as long as they are willing to take that first step themselves."

Locals get sneak peek of Caves movie

By Darcy Wallace
IVN Staff Writer

Those closest to the Oregon Caves National Monument had two opportunities to view a pair of documentary films on the monument and the Oregon Caves Chateau on Saturday, May 21, and Tuesday, May 24.

"The Marble Halls of Oregon" and "The Chateau at the Oregon Caves" are scheduled to air June 22 on Southern Oregon Public Television (SOPTV).

Co-produced by the National Parks Service and SOPTV in association with Greg Frederick Productions, the films premiered in four Southern Oregon locations to help draw in public awareness and support for the monument and chateau.

The nonprofit group Friends

of the Oregon Caves hosted the film showings with the park service. The showings included refreshments, a raffle and the option for guests to sign up with Friends.

Friends executive director Sue Densmore said the documentaries gave two perspectives on the monument's history: one focusing on the formation of the caves and its role in society over the years, and the other featuring the development of the chateau.

"The Oregon Caves monument is one of the smallest monuments in the nation that has a Friends group," Densmore said. "What's exciting is we have many individuals not just in [the Valley] but throughout the U.S. who want to support continuing programs, restoration and cultural op-

portunities."

On May 24, the Illinois Valley Senior Center hosted the showing, featuring local canine Riley, otherwise known as "Bruno" in the films, "King of the Siskiyou."

"Bruno" was the dog belonging to explorer Elijah Davidson; as the story goes, he "discovered" the Caves when he strayed from the path while hunting to follow his dog, stumbling upon the complex cave system that eventually became the monument as it is today.

The first film, "The Marble Halls of Oregon," described the natural surroundings and geographic abnormalities of the Caves and how they were formed. It also documented how tourism of the monument evolved, turning to an educational focus based

on science.

In "The Chateau at the Oregon Caves," the film showed the building's history from its construction by Gust Lium, the flood of 1964 and its present-day status.

Densmore said plans are slowly beginning for a full restoration of the Caves Chateau, after more than 75 years of existence.

While bringing safety features to more modern standards, Densmore said the group also wants to keep the original look as much as possible.

"It has 23 rooms and will need a complete upgrade in plumbing, electrical, life safety and accessibility," Densmore said. "Starting now [we're] restoring furniture and much of the interior.

Full renovations aren't likely

to take place until a few years later, 2014 or 2015. For now, the group is in the "research" phase and beginning to raise funds, which could be in the range of \$6 million for this level of restoration.

According to Densmore, the Friends of the Oregon Caves group formed three years ago when community members noticed monument attendance had decreased, and some might have forgotten about what was in their backyard.

"Different people came together and realized the monument had kind of been forgotten," Densmore said. "Also the park service hoped someone might put together a Friends group. There has been a wonderful response, and we have numerous supporters throughout the U.S."