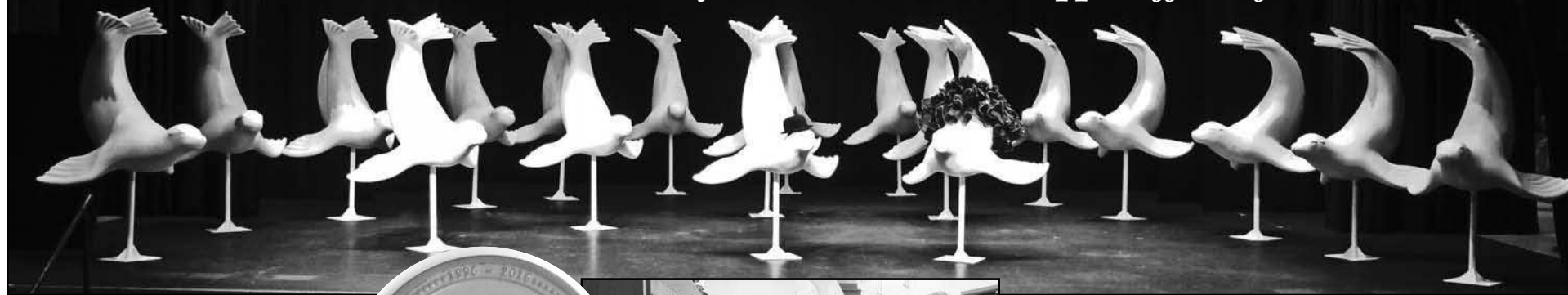


Dancing with Sea Lions

Florence Events Center's 20th anniversary celebration shows ripple effect of art on the coast



Florence Events Center (FEC) decided to bring attention to the Oregon coast's population of Stellar sea lions in honor of its 20th anniversary in 2016.

FEC Director Kevin Rhodes and marketing specialist Jennifer Connor first revealed the Dancing with Sea Lions project — incorporating public art, a fundraising opportunity and the FEC's 20th anniversary — on June 8, 2015.

Dancing with Sea Lions installed 20 hand-decorated fiberglass sea lions along the central Oregon coast from Newport to Winchester Bay, with a long dance leading to Florence. The sea lions “Splashed Off!” to their locations in April, and will return to the FEC for the Migration Gala and auction at 6 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 8. From there, the sea lions will go to their permanent homes.

Connor said, “I would foresee that some of these sea lions will be in the area for years.” The FEC planning committee hopes that many of the sea lions will still be accessible to the public after the auction.

Cowpainters, a business in Chicago, Ill., cast the 7-1/2-foot sea lions to resemble native Stellar sea lions “with the little ears and the whiskers” and a “dancing, sweeping” form, with the tail in the air, said Connor.

It matches Florence's ‘City in Motion’ theme.

Twenty-one artists painted, sculpted, tiled and



The 7-1/2-foot tall Stellar sea lion sculpture “Porter” inspired the Oregon coast community, even Mayor Joe Henry.

BY CHANTELE MEYER
Siuslaw News

active with the city's Public Arts Committee and Florence Urban Renewal Agency, said, “This is really terrific. You see this unbelievable expression of creativity, fun and excitement, and all by these artists in our community. See the dunes? No, you've got to see the art!”

Connor said, “This is a project not just for the FEC and our celebration, but a project for the city, community and whole Oregon coast.”

The final auction of the sea lions will raise funds for the Friends of the FEC to build additional areas back stage, upgrade technology equipment for the theater and provide future grants for area community groups to perform at the events center.

Project planners hope visitors follow maps to see each sea lion and take pictures with them, potentially posting to the project's social media sites.

People who find all 20 sea lions can earn a Dancing with Sea Lions geocache coin, created by Cheryl Pinnock from the logo designed by Karyllynn Keppol.

“Dancing with Sea Lions is really supposed to get people talking about art,” Connor said.

For more information on Dancing with Sea Lions, go to dancingwithsealions.com or eventcenter.org.

designed the full-size sculptures and one tiny statuette. Each unique sea lion included a date for every year the FEC has been in existence.

Many of the artists were local residents, and area businesses sponsored the sea lions. Friends of the Florence Events Center was instrumental with the writing of grants, and a grant from Spirit Mountain Community Fund provided \$500 stipends for the artists.

“We like to think of it as the ripple effect of the arts across the Oregon coast. This gives an opportunity for the FEC to show it is here with the performing arts and with community events. This is an opportunity to really give local artists the notoriety and respect they deserve,” Connor said. “The FEC has been a visual arts gallery embracing the arts all 20 years. We've had visual artists there, and they've worked very hard.”

Florence City Councilor Joshua Greene, who is also

21 DANCING WITH SEA LIONS ARTISTS AND SPONSORS

“RHODY” THE SEA LION PUP BY FRANCES ROGERS

“PORTIA T. DOODLE” BY RUTH BASS

— SPONSORED BY LITTLE BROWN HEN CAFÉ

“THALASSA” BY BRIAN BLOSS

— SPONSORED BY COAST INSURANCE

“ECO AND THE ECOSYSTEMS OF OREGON”

BY BENJAMIN CAHOON

— SPONSORED BY SIUSLAW PUBLIC LIBRARY

“SUNNY THE SEA LION” BY ISABELLA CASTLE

— SPONSORED BY OREGON PACIFIC BANK

“FEELING FABULOUS” BY ROSY CLARK

— SPONSORED BY BANNER BANK

“MOONBURST” BY JANE CONNELLEY

— SPONSORED BY SEA LION CAVES

“STELLA THE SEAWOLF”

BY CHRISTINE CALDWELL DAVIS

— SPONSORED BY PEACEHEALTH FOUNDATION

“PORTER PERFORMS”

BY COLLEEN GOODWIN-CHRONISTER

— SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF THE FEC

“GREEN-EYED SUE” BY MATT HAWK

— SPONSORED BY SIUSLAW NEWS

“CIRCLING FISH” BY EILEEN HEARNE

— SPONSORED BY FRED MEYER

“IT'S A WILD THING” BY RON HILDENBRAND

— SPONSORED BY PORT OF SIUSLAW

“WISH YOU WERE HERE” BY MARSHA HORNER

— SPONSORED BY SEA LION CAVES

“UMI NO NAMI” BY ELLEN HUNTINGDON

— SPONSORED BY FLORENCE URBAN RENEWAL AGENCY

“BUTTERFLIES” BY KARYLYNN KEPPO

— SPONSORED BY DRIFTWOOD SHORES

“DIVER'S STORY” BY KASSY KEPPO

— SPONSORED BY SIUSLAW OUTREACH SERVICES

“HECETA TAKES FLIGHT” BY JULIE LARSON

— SPONSORED BY OREGON COAST MAGAZINE

“NEPTUNE'S BREAKERS” BY KATIE MILLER

— SPONSORED BY C & M STABLES

“SPLASH LIKE NO ONE IS WATCHING”

BY JUDY MURPHY

— SPONSORED BY WEST COAST AUTO BODY

“GIFTS OF THE SEA” BY KIM PICKELL

— SPONSORED BY UMPQUA BANK

“PINNIPED PARADE” BY TERRY WOODALL

— SPONSORED BY THREE RIVERS CASINO RESORT