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CENTRAL OREGON ARTS SCENE

Art in the High Desert hangs it up

New leadership would be needed for highly ranked juried art show to continue

BY DAVID JASPER
The Bulletin

The future of Art in the High Desert is up in the air, but one thing is not: Dave and Carla Fox, the founders and primary keepers of Bend's premier art show over the past 12 years, are ready to break away.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the late-August show two consecutive years.

"It just seemed like this is a sensible time to kind of let it fade into the darkness out there," Dave Fox said. "It may be that down the road, there might be another possibility to put something together, once things kind of settle out, if they do in our lifetimes."

Getting a glimpse of life outside the show's demands played a factor in their decision, as did other considerations — ones involving family time and four grandkids they don't usually see in the summertime.

"Too much work to do," Carla Fox said. In a telling anecdote, Fox told GO! that in 2008, the show's inaugural year, she and Dave bought kayaks. They used them only a few times that summer.

When AHD was canceled last year, they used their boats again — for the first time in 12 years.

"I was overwhelmed when I figured that out," Fox said.

Then there's the income lost by diverting their attention away from her art career,



Chandler Photography/Submitted photo

Art in the High Desert had been an August presence in the Old Mill District since 2008. It was canceled this year and last due to COVID-19, and its founders are stepping away. New leadership will be required to keep it alive.

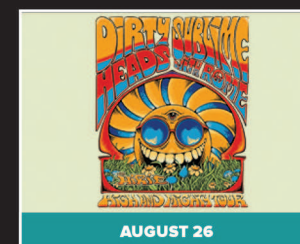
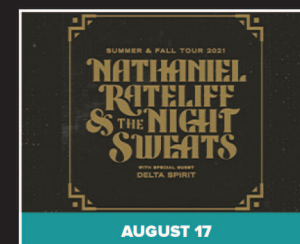
part of which involves teaching. The work of planning, organizing, finding sponsors, jurying and more that the show requires begins eight to 10 months ahead of the show.

Prior to last year, through the Herculean efforts of the Foxes and the nonprofit's small working board, Art in the High Desert took place annually on the west bank of the Deschutes River, where it passes through the Old Mill District. Through the years, the intent and execution of AHD remained the same: hosting a competitive art show honoring juried artists from around the country and region, right in the Foxes home of Central Oregon.

By design, Art in the High Desert never sought to be a festival, the Foxes noted. Absent were the spectacle and multiple amenities of other events, such as live music, jumpy houses, beer gardens and food vendors.

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