

ArtStroll: The Premiere

Written by Administrator
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The concept behind ArtStroll isn't revolutionary or new. It just never happened. "We all felt there was a need," noted Donna Lee, special-events coordinator for MidCoast Fine Arts. "It's not that it hasn't been thought of." The problem, Lee said, was that "no one initiated it."

That's no longer true. About two years ago, said Dean Schroeder, executive director of MidCoast, the Downtown Davenport Association (now the event arm of DavenportOne) budgeted for an arts-based street party. "They created the impetus to start things," Schroeder said. The inaugural festival was originally scheduled for last year, but construction on Second Street dragged on too long.

But next week, the Quad Cities will see what organizers came up with. The free event billed as ArtStroll: The Premiere will take over Second Street in Davenport from Harrison Street to Pershing Avenue. The party starts at 5 p.m. on August 4 and runs until 10 p.m.

MidCoast and DavenportOne teamed up to plan the festival, with the arts group working with cultural entities and individual artists, and the downtown association handling most of the logistics. The two groups have already scheduled a 2001 ArtStroll, and they hope to make it an annual event.

Most impressive about the ArtStroll premiere is the level of involvement. More than 20 different arts organizations and businesses have helped put the night together, and more than two dozen artists are participating.

Joedy Cook, executive director of Cassandra Manning Ballet Theatre, said she's been pleased with Schroeder's spread-the-wealth philosophy. "He wants as many high-quality arts organizations on his team as he can get," said Cook, whose group will have a costume exhibit at ArtStroll. "He's willing to help each of us meet our goals."

"We have too few times when all the arts organizations present together," said Nancy Senn-Kerbs, program manager for The Family Museum of Arts and Science. "It brings the culture out on the street. ... An obvious sense of continuity in the arts community is growing." The Family Museum will have two of its educators, Glenn Boyles and Chuck Knudsen, displaying student work and doing demonstrations of their own art.

People attending the event might look at ArtStroll as a sort of sampler platter of culture the Quad Cities has to offer. The festival will "showcase what is really available in a relaxed, informal setting," said Erin Lounsberry, marketing director for the Quad City Symphony Orchestra. A string ensemble of symphony members will entertain ArtStroll crowds from 7 to 10 p.m.

While arts will be the order of the day, Schroeder said the event is also designed to give a boost to downtown-revitalization efforts. Every business district needs a hub, and "Second Street is that hub," Schroeder said.

One crucial element in creating hub is the Davenport Museum of Art's planned move into a new building on Second Street in 2003. "I think it [ArtStroll] will be a way to get acquainted with

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our new neighborhood,” said Michelle Robinson, the museum’s curator of collections and exhibitions. “It sort of is a housewarming party.” The museum will have a tent on its future site with visual representations of the new museum and people available to answer questions.

One lasting result of the one-evening event will be a photograph modeled after the famous 1958 “A Great Day in Harlem” picture of a jazz community. River Cities’ Reader Publisher Todd McGreevy is coordinating the project, which he hopes will be a “snapshot in time” of the Quad City arts scene, he said. He added that he would like to draw not only established artists, but young people who want to be artists, scene supporters, and older artists as well. “There’s an old guard out there that a lot of young people don’t even know about,” he said. Registration runs from 5 to 5:50 p.m., and the photo will be taken at 6 p.m. on the proposed site of the Davenport Museum of Art.

Other participating arts groups include The Putnam Museum, which will offer two performances by Heritage Theatre at 5 and 8:30 p.m.; Junior Achievement, which will host an Exchange City open house and serve as the festival’s nerve center; and Quad City Arts, which will offer poetry and improv performances by Metro Arts 2000 program participants at 6:30 p.m. Performers from Arthur Murray Dance Studio will be dancing in the streets.

The improvisational aural experimenters Intensity will help close things out with a musical performance at 9 p.m., in tandem with a metal-welding performance by sculptor Eric Mart.

Second Street will also be lined with classic cars from Veit’s Vettes & Collector Cars, and giant kaleidoscopes from the collection of Tom Chouteau will be on display in the 200 block of East Second Street. Retailers, the bank, and the hotel on Second Street will be hosting open houses, with complimentary beverages and hors d’oeuvres served on the sidewalk.

ArtStroll was modeled a bit after the successful four-times-a-year Gallery Hop in the Rock Island District, but there are important differences. “Gallery Hop is the premise on which ArtStroll is based,” Lee said, “but much bigger.”

In addition, while Gallery Hop’s energy is necessarily indoors and fragmented, “we’re trying to keep the energy out on the streets” and communal, Schroeder said. Another divergence is that Gallery Hops concentrate on commercial galleries, while ArtStroll focuses on individual artists and the collective strength of the entire area’s cultural organizations.

The setting might also attract people who are put off by or uncomfortable with a gallery setting. “There are people who are intimidated by going into a formal gallery or museum,” Schroeder said.