

ANNUAL ART WALK HELD IN BELOIT

May 15, 2017 at 4:00 pm / By AUSTIN MONTGOMERY Staff writer



Austin Montgomery/Beloit Daily News Featured 2017 Art Walk artist Sam Haney Press (right), award winning book sculptor and freelance illustrator, explains her artwork to patrons Friday evening.

BELOIT - The 15th annual Art Walk in downtown Beloit got underway Friday, with more artists participating than ever. The event went along with a unique, one-time-only citizen artist contest competing for the right to fly a custom-made banner on city streets.

Organizers said the event drew thousands of residents and visitors to the area for shopping, live music and hors d'oeuvres. Friday's event opened up with 25 downtown Beloit businesses hosting artists and their works.

The Downtown Banner Art Project drew 33 entries from community residents, with Beloiter Nikole Wagner taking home the Judges Choice Award. Winners of the People's Choice and First Place awards will be selected on Monday. Canvases of proposed banners were on sale for \$75.

Wagner is a freelance artist who works in a variety of mixed media, and has owned an art studio for the past 15 years in the city.

"It's been great so far," said Downtown Beloit Association Executive Director Shauna El-Amin. "It's encouraging to see so many quality artists here in Beloit."

The handmade market brought together multiple vendors selling jewelry, artwork, photographs and other unique items. All entries to the banner contest were available for viewing in the forum space of the Visit Beloit office at 500 Public Ave.

This year's featured artist, Sam Haney Press, brought unique pendent and pin items using various graphics from anthropological texts. The Madison-based artist is the secretary for the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists, and helps run art shows at conventions in the Chicago and Madison areas. The award winning book sculptor and freelance illustrator drew attention at the reception event.

El-Amin said this year's success was owed to the grassroots, word-of-mouth spread of ideas leading up to the event. She also said the banner competition drove community participation.

"We really saw a lot of great people come out for this," she added. "It's important to support local artists and businesses whenever we can."