

ArtWalk brightens downtown

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Despite the cooler weather, residents still showed up downtown to explore the work of community artists.

The 11th annual Beloit ArtWalk, sponsored by the Downtown Beloit Association, started at 5 p.m. at the Vision Center, 500 Public Ave.

In all about 25 different locations hosted music, paintings, jewelry and more for the event.

Featured artist Roberta Haakinson showed off her paintings at the Vision Center. Haakinson brought about 17 watercolor paintings with her.

When the DBA approached her about being the featured artist she said she was flattered.

She started painting about five years ago, and paints everything from flowers to abstractions.

She insists that she doesn't have natural talent to be a painter. In fact her high school art teacher told her she didn't have the talent to be an artist.

"My husband has natural talent," she said. "I just have the patience to finish and follow through."

Some of her paintings can take up to 14 or 15 hours to complete.

"You have to let it dry, leave it alone and really decide what you want to do," she said.

Beloit resident Elton Phillips said he's come to the art show the past couple of years. While at the Vision Center, Phillips was checking out photographer Justin Presny's work

"It's a nice variety of art, and there are a lot of unique items," he said. "I do some photography myself so it's nice to see other people's work."

He added last year his wife participated in the event by selling jewelry she made.

Presny, a Beloit resident and recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, said he's been taking photographs for about six years.

The ArtWalk was his first time selling his photos to the public. Many of his photos were shot in Green Bay and feature nature shots.

"I talked to (the DBA) and figured I'd give it a shot," he said.

Beloit resident Barbara Seguin said she's attended the ArtWalk nearly every year.

“I enjoy seeing the art and meeting new people,” she said. “I like that it’s a community event.”

Seguin said she has bought a few pieces from artists over the last few years.

Artist Michelle Hebb showed off her hand sculpted lamps at The Villager, 429 Grand Ave., along with clothing and jewelry.

She said she’s been apart of the ArtWalk all 11 years, and began the first event at the Villager.

“I really like the social aspect,” she said. “I’m not a very good marketer, but this event lets people come to me.”

Cartoonist John Porcellino, creator of King Cat Comics, was also at The Villager, selling book compilations of the comic.

“I started in mid-May of 1989,” he said. “I’ve been drawing since I was a kid, though.”

In addition to paintings and photographs, the Beloit Memorial High School Theatre group performed songs from the play “Zombie Prom.”

The group is heading to Scotland at the end of July for two weeks to perform the play, said Theatre director Greg Wallendal.

The Off-Broadway play is a forbidden love story between Jonny and Toffee. Jonny, a student so rebellious “he doesn’t spell his name with an H,” dies after Toffee’s parents force her to break up with him.

He comes back as a non-threatening zombie in the hopes of attending prom with Toffee. The group leaves for Scotland on July 29 and will perform the play four times over the two weeks.
