

ArtWalk draws crowds to downtown Beloit

By ERICA PENNINGTON Staff writer | Posted: Monday, May 16, 2016 4:00 pm

BELOIT — It was dreary outside, but Beloit businesses were bursting with color Friday.

ArtWalk, an annual Downtown Beloit Association event that celebrates local artists and their work, drew a variety of visitors despite the rain.

This year over 30 artists showcased their work at participating downtown Beloit businesses. All items available for sale were handmade.

Offerings ranged from body lotions to beautiful paintings and sketches, unique jewelry, baskets and much more.

“I usually don’t really sell my work usually, so ArtWalk and Holidazzle (at Christmas) give a chance for me to come out and show it off,” said artist Peg Bredeson at Gallery ABBA.

Bredeson, of Beloit, turns ordinary gourds into extraordinarily imaginative works of art. Some of her pieces appear to be realistic animals, while others are whimsical and just for fun.

“I’ve been really getting into ‘steampunk,’ which has an industrial and mechanical element to the art...it’s so much fun to me, and the pieces become what they want to be,” she said.

Nearby, featured ArtWalk artist Jan Knutson, a basket-weaver from Beloit, spoke with visitors about her 20-plus year passion for the art form.

Knutson also showed off and sold many creations, including mini baskets to house salt and pepper shakers and small hanging baskets made to hold garlic.

“I was so flattered to be chosen as the featured artist,” Knutson said. “I really enjoy making baskets because I get the chance to be creative.”

Just a few doors down from Gallery ABBA, a crowd of art lovers gathered at The Villager as soon as ArtWalk began for the night.



ArtWalk 2016

"Art Squares," a special community art project, is showcased at The Villager during Beloit's ArtWalk on Friday. The squares were created by more than 40 Stateline Area artists. Each square was sold for \$40, with half of the money going to the artist and half supporting the Mel Donny Flower Fund to beautify downtown Beloit.

Sipping on wine, a line began to form before 6 p.m. All were eager for their chance to own a piece of “Art Squares,” a project featuring mini paintings created by more than 40 Stateline Area artists.

“We provided the squares, and artists were allowed to do whatever they’d like with them,” said Betsy Schmeichen, owner of The Villager. “We just wanted it to be a fun community event for the artists and the buyers.”

Each square was sold for \$40, with a portion of the profits donated to the Mel Donny Flower Fund.

Sue Fugate, of Beloit, was the very first person in line.

“I knew what I wanted until now,” Fugate said, laughing. “This is such a great idea...I really love that we’re an artsy community that keeps getting better and better.”