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ArtParty raises thousands for Anton Art Center

Director says funds will help with community outreach efforts

By Mitch Hotts, *The Macomb Daily*

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More than 400 arts supporters turned out on a gorgeous late-summer evening Thursday to attend ArtParty, the annual outdoor fundraiser for the Anton Art Center in downtown Mount Clemens.

Guests who attended the \$60-a-ticket event mingled while nibbling on various goodies from 26 local restaurants, taking in some artwork on display and dancing to the sounds of DJ K&S Productions.

“It’s a beautiful night and we’re thanking the good Lord cooperated with us in the weather department,” said Art Center benefactor Gebran “Gabe” Anton, the longtime developer and former clothier, referring to 70-degree temperatures and clear skies for the event.

Now in its 24th year, the three-hour ArtParty held under two tents on Macomb Place in the heart of the city is a key fundraiser for the nonprofit Anton Art Center, one of metropolitan Detroit’s premier art galleries.

Between the admission, along with a host of raffles and auction of artwork donated by numerous area artists, the event was expected to bring in more than \$25,000.

The funds will help pay the center’s bills and move forward on its mission to bring the arts to the community, and the community to the arts, according to new executive director Phil Gilchrist.

“We recently updated our mission statement to say our job is to enrich and inspire people of all ages through the arts instead of just visual art. We want to bring in some performing arts and some different things than maybe we’ve seen in the past,” he said.

Gilchrist, a former grant writer for the center, said he’d love to establish an exchange between Anton Art Center and various galleries in Detroit, which he labels as a new “hot spot” for art and culture.

“I’d really to like to do more reaching out to the arts community beyond our border, and have people from other communities coming into ours,” he said. “I feel this area is on the verge of breaking out.”

Of course, the big attraction at ArtParty is the tastefest-style food service -- and this year was no exception.

People were talking about the shrimp salad from J. Baldwin’s Restaurant, squash soup from Captain’s Landing, potato pancakes from Little Camille’s By the Bay, and eggrolls filled with pulled pork and

homemade rice from Orleans Sports Cafe.

“Everything I’ve tasted has been phenomenal,” said Sharon Giffen, who works at Macomb Community College.

Steve Saph, an insurance agent and chairman of the Mount Clemens Downtown Development Authority, praised the local merchants who volunteered to work the event. “This is a great out-of-the-box event for Phil Gilchrist, just a very nice evening.”

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