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Main Line Art Center will celebrate 75th year

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The Main Line Art Center is bringing back a favorite annual event, just in time to mark a milestone year in its history.

A free Family Arts Festival on Saturday, Sept. 10, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. is the kick-off event to a full 12 months of celebration of the organization's 75th anniversary year.

Family-friendly entertainment, hands-on arts projects, face painting and food and refreshments will all be part of the day.

A highlight of the activities will be the unveiling at 1:30 p.m. of the art center's new Arts Alive Mobile.

This eye-poppingly decorated van will be used to make two or three scheduled and spontaneous stops per month throughout the year at schools and community events, literally putting in motion the theme of "Art for Everyone."

The Main Line Art Center, located at 746 Panmure Road, Haverford, for many years had held a free Children's Arts Festival, attracting between 300 and 500 visitors each year, but it was discontinued after 2008, because of the challenges of finding funding in the recent economy, Communications Director Rachel Ammon explained.

Now, as the center approaches its 75th year in 2012, a PNC Arts Alive grant is making it possible once again. PNC Arts Alive is a five-year, \$5 million initiative of the PNC Foundation to support visual and performing arts groups. Its goal is to increase arts access and engagement. Only 26 arts organizations in the region were selected to receive grants, Ammon said.

The timing was perfect. In restarting the fall festival, though, Ammon said a name change was logical. "It struck us that this is absolutely a family event," she said, with parents often working alongside kids on projects.

The grant is also being used to support a new idea: the mobile arts van.

Art Center Executive Director Judy Herman said they took an older van belonging to the center and had it graphic-wrapped with a painting motif that will be instantly identifiable.

Schools and other organizations can request visits by the Arts Alive Mobile, to provide free art activities led by Street Squad artists. At each hour-long stop, children will be able to take part in two art projects, one they can complete and take home, and the other part of a collaborative, community-wide project.

Children will make tiles that will be used to create a mosaic design on a bench in the art center's garden. As Ammon described it, a tree meant to represent a family tree, will "grow" out of the design. It should be completed and ready to unveil at next September's Family Arts Festival.

"It will be a permanent piece of art at the center," she said; something that children can come back to visit and find their unique piece – and maybe someday bring their own children to see, to "show that they were part of the art center."

That's just part of the fun, though.

The theme for the day is "Celebrating the Global Roots of Our Community." "Activities are all inspired by the cultures within the community," Ammon said. Examples of projects include Iroquois wampum beads, a Japanese carp windsock, Galimoto African wire sculpture, Mexican folk art, and a family cultural doll.

A full line-up of entertainment is planned, starting at 11 a.m. with a performance by magician, comedian and world-record-holding balloon sculptor John Cassidy.

Kids' band The Cat's Pajamas will perform at 12:30 and again after the arts van ceremony at 1:30, blending music with stories, dance, puppets and props.

Kathy O'Connell of Kids Corner on WXPB will be on hand for the art mobile unveiling.

While the emphasis on Sept. 10 is on engaging families in the arts, for nearly 75 years, the Main Line Art Center has been providing visual arts classes for all ages and abilities, exhibition opportunities, and artistic and professional development programs.

Herman said as it enters its fourth quarter-century, the Arts Alive Mobile and programs like the Family Arts Festival will allow it to continue and expand its mission and outreach to the community.

Ammon said as word has gotten around, the art mobile is already booked for September and October. Organization interested in scheduling a stop should call 610-525-0272.

For more information about the Family Arts Festival or the Main Line Art Center, visit www.mainlineart.org.

URL:

http://www.mainlinemedianews.com/articles/2011/08/30/main_line_times/life/doc4e5da2355bc55211967235.prt