

ARTS

Flower Pot Project beautifies city streets

MARGARET CAVERS MAY
NORTHERN DANCE THEATRE SOCIETY

Winter has been stubbornly holding on this year, long over-staying it's welcome, but a sure sign that spring has arrived in Fort St. John is the appearance of flower pots on street corners and in front of public buildings.

The colourful pots, each one decorated with an original painting by a local artist, have been adorning the streets since 2001 and have become a popular tradition in the city.

The Flowerpot Project is part of Communities in Bloom and is a partnership between the City of Fort St. John and the Arts Council and its member groups. Artists are invited to paint fifty new pots each year while fifty pots that have been on the streets for two years are cleaned, touched-up and sent to auction, so everyone has an opportunity to own one of these unique and beautiful pieces of art.

The response of artists has been enthusiastic with new people coming forward every year to paint a pot, with

others having painted at least one pot every year since the project began.

As well as adding colour and beauty to our streets and displaying the amazing talents of our city's artists, the Flowerpot Project serves as a fundraiser for the Fort St. John Community Arts Council and participating member groups.

This year, the groups participating in the project are the North Peace Potters' Guild and Northern Dance Theatre Society. Anyone can support the project by sponsoring one of the pots on the street, and everyone is invited to come to Centennial Park on Sunday, June 7 where the coffee will be free and the 2007 pots, plus a few newly painted one, will be auctioned off. These flowerpots are an attractive addition to any home or business, no two are alike and each one is a testament to the wonderful artistic talent to be found in this city.

For more information on the Flower Pot Project or the upcoming Flower Pot Auction, please contact the Fort St. John Community Arts Council at (250) 787-2781.

Pipeline to the Arts

ART EXHIBITIONS

- A Long Way Home, Peace Gallery North.

MUSIC

- Shane Yellowbird, May 21, 7 p.m., North Peace Cultural Centre.
- The Kyle Night Band, May 23, 8 p.m., Egan's Pub.
- Open Mic Night, May 27, 8 p.m., Egan's Pub

FILM

- Monday Night at the Movies: Outsourced, May 25, 7 p.m., Aurora Cinema.
- Champagne Safari, May 22, 6:30 p.m., Lido Theatre.

THEATRE

- The Jungle Book, May 29, 7 p.m. and May 30, 1 p.m and 7 p.m., North Peace Cultural Centre.

POTTERY

- Chili Bowl Bash, June 19, Artspost.



Submitted Photo

Meaghan McKale and Zoe Desfosses, senior dancers with the Northern Dance Theatre Society, are both painting a flower pot for the auction.

Artists needed for 2009 Flower Pot Project

TESSA HOLLOWAY
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Calling all artists: the Fort St. John Community Arts Council is still looking for up to 20 volunteers to paint a flower pot this year.

The flower pots are part of the Communities in Bloom competition, and 50 new pots are painted each year to be planted with flowers and displayed on 100th Street and at the North Peace Regional Airport.

But while 25 artists have been secured, more are needed to spice up the pots with colour.

"We probably need at least another 15 to 20 who I haven't got confirmed or even know names yet," said Rosemary Landry, a volunteer from the North Peace Potters Guild who is organizing the pots this year.

But that's not the only hiccup so far this year, as the pots haven't arrived yet with less than a month before the deadline for a finished painting.

"The pots need to be to Dunvegan Gardens by April 1, so we're getting a little antsy about where the new ones are to get started on the painting," said Landry.

The new pots are expect-

ed to arrive any day, when volunteer painters will get their canvas.

Landry said painters don't need to be professional artists, but just create a quality painting.

"If the quality's not there then people won't pay the money, and we're looking at it as a fundraiser," she said, but she added a very basic design can work as well as landscapes or flowers.

"We have everything from a few outlines of what looks like fish crossing over rocks painted on the bare pot to very elaborate bears jumping out at you."

The annual fundraiser raises about \$10,000 each year for arts programming to be distributed evenly between the arts groups that volunteer with the program and the Arts Post.

The money is raised through the flower pot auction, which will take place June 7 this year, as well as the sponsorships of pots from local businesses.

"That money is not all free money, as there is tremendous expenses as well," said Sue Popesku, naming primarily the cost of the new flower pots.

Anyone interested in painting a pot can call the arts council at 250-787-2781 or email fsjarts@telus.net.

Old flower pots find new homes

Flower Pot Auction brings in over \$8,000 for the arts

HIEDI IRVINE
ALASKA HIGHWAY NEWS

Ipods, magnetic poetry, country scenes, culture, and even wizardry was painted on one-of-a-kind flower pots auctioned off on Sunday afternoon.

The Flower Pot Auction, which took place in Centennial Park, was a vast improvement from the last auction held, and the sunshine had everything to do with it.

President of the Fort St. John Community Arts Council, Lisa Bush, said the weather is always the determining factor, and she couldn't be happier about the 17 C weather, according Environment Canada.

"There was quite a bit of excitement with people competing for various ones, that's a measure of success, I think," said Bush.

The auction sprung from 2001 when the City hosted the British Columbia Festival of the Arts. The first auction was held two years later and was embraced by the community.

The arts council raised \$8,075 this year, with the highest bid of \$400 going towards a pot painted by local artist, Sonja Butts.

"You never can tell, they go anywhere from \$35 up to \$400 so it's quite a range," said Bush, who fan-



Hiedi Irvine/AHN

Ed Shuster was one of the two volunteers who carried around flower pots, with auctioneer Aaron Loewen in the back, during the arts council's annual Flower Pot Auction.

ced a strawberry inspired pot that was sold during the auction.

There were approximately 40 eager bidders, and the pots flew off the ground, with friendly bidding wars between members of the crowd. It was supposed to run from 1 to 4 p.m. but thanks to the crowd's enthusiasm, the pots only lasted for an hour and a half.

Auctioneer Aaron Loewen has been volunteering to host the auction for five years, and said it turned out to be decent, and something he doesn't want to soon give up.

"It's a great fundraiser, that's for sure, the crowd was great and I appreciate everyone coming out," said Loewen.

There are currently new one-of-a-

kind flower pots on display throughout the city, they will be sold at an auction in two years. Like many of the arts council members, Bush said she's always happily surprised by the city's creativity.

"It constantly blows me away what people come up with, the conceptual stuff that goes on, it's quite staggering," she said.

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Melanie Robinson photo

The annual flower pot auction put on by the Fort St. John Arts Council was held on June 7 with many attending to take in the work of local artists. Here, Christine Todd, a parent with the Northern Dance Society, the member group that helped put the auction together, shows off a pot painted by local artist Merle Hendricks. The event raised \$8,040.