

Fine Arts Commission Village of Deerfield

Commitment to the Arts

The Village of Deerfield has always strived to be actively involved and supportive of the arts. The Village has enthusiastically hosted, sponsored, publicized and funded many art events in the past years. The Village's commitment to the arts is embodied in the establishment of a Fine Arts Commission. This nine member special purpose commission spearheads the coordination and planning of all Village art programs. The duties of the Fine Arts Commission are to promote, encourage and foster an artistic and cultural environment within the Village by supporting diverse artistic groups and individuals.

For example, the Fine Arts Commission has facilitated and hosted a three day Fine Arts Festival for over the last five years. This festival provides the opportunity for local artists to exhibit and sell their artwork. The Village purchases artwork annually at this event to furnish and display in Village Hall as a sign of support of art and the local festival. Participants are also presented with awards and cash-equivalent prizes. The commission has even been able to incorporate elementary school and high school students into the festivities by adding a youth art component. The Fine Arts Festival has grown in the number of artist participants from 67 in the first year to over 130 in recent years. Attendance at this festival often reaches 7,500-8,000 people.

The Fine Arts Commission was also tasked with selecting a piece of artwork to commemorate the Village's centennial. The Commission selected two 17-foot concrete statues by Sculptor, Mary Block of Lake Zurich. Once completed, the Village had to move the 21,000 pound sculptures about 14 miles to their new home in front of Village Hall. The price of relocating these enormous sculptures was \$20,000, almost the same price as the sculptures themselves. The sculptures depict a mother and father embracing their three children. The artwork represents Deerfield very well, as our Village is a family oriented community.

Other programs the Fine Arts Commission has established are the Art Donation Program and the Artist Showcase Series. The Art Donation Program has been beneficial to all parties involved, as it has successfully allowed the Village to receive artwork for display with limited liability, and in return, provided a tax incentive to the donator while preserving their art work. Likewise, the Artist Showcase Series is an important event that takes place a few times a year, either at the Library or the senior center. The Artist Showcase Series is an event that exhibits various styles of artistry, ranging from antiques, dance, writing and folk art, to even promoting an exhibit that showcases food as art. This series provides for diversity in craftsmanship that is unique and valued by a wide audience.

As a demonstration of the Village's commitment to its art-positive policy, Deerfield has taken an active role in preserving artwork. In January of 2005, three sculptures were restored by the Village and the approximate restoration cost was \$40,000 for each of the three sculptures. Although this was a significant cost, the Village felt it was necessary to restore the sculptures and preserve the artwork for future generations.

Additionally, the Village has devoted a page on its website to displaying descriptions and images of Village owned artwork, so that people interested can find out more information. Similarly, the Village willingly publicizes information in newsletters, on websites, on the cable public access channel and has even donated banners to the public library to promote art events.

Integration of the Arts into the Community

The Fine Arts Commission has worked to create long lasting and meaningful arts programs in the community. To help solicit donations from corporations, businesses and individuals, the Fine Arts Commission has worked with the Deerfield Park Foundation to accept donations as a 501c-3 not-for-profit to provide a tax incentive to the donors. Through this collaborative effort the Village can receive artwork to be placed at various locations around town.

Through the Village's collaboration with the Park District, two notable donations the Village has received have been from artist Neil H. Weinfield and the Sara Lee Corporation. Neil Weinfield is a renowned sculptor who has donated two abstract sculptures to the Village. Conveniently, his sculptures are designed in such a manner that makes them suitable for outdoor placement and are typically constructed from aluminum and covered in long-lasting paint. His sculpture "Cross Currents" is currently being displayed outside the Deerfield Park District. Another sculpture entitled, "Cascade" now sits out front the local Deer Spring Pool. Both of these sculptures required a high level of collaboration between the Village and the Park District in order to find the most appropriate location for each of the artworks to be displayed.

The Sara Lee Corporation has also been very generous and donated artwork prior to their relocation out of town. The three sculptures created by artist, Antoine Poncet, entitled Agrippine, Uncorsuptible, and Altissimo, are now being displayed in front of Village Hall and the adjacent Deerfield Public Library. The Village has been the grateful recipient of these donated artworks and these donations exemplify the resourcefulness the Village has exercised in preserving artwork.

The Village has worked with both the high school and the elementary schools to advance art programs in the community. The Deerfield Farmers Market worked with the art teachers at Deerfield High School to create an artistic poster contest to promote the market. Each member of the high school's art class created a poster which was then narrowed down to 11 finalists by the art teacher. The finalists' posters were presented to the Farmers Market Committee for consideration. The chosen poster is now framed in Village Hall – as well as in many of the windows of the stores downtown. This program was extremely successful as it increased artists' participation and served as a means of using art to support another very important local event – the Farmers Market.

In addition, each year the Village hosts a Family Days celebration over the 4th of July. The Family Days Committee hosts a poster contest for elementary school children. The posters are hung at a local businesses and the winner is chosen on the 4th of July. The winners receive a small prize for their artistic excellence.

Window exhibits in businesses around town are also encouraged and approved by the Village. These exhibits are aesthetically pleasing to residents and customers as they travel through town. Most notably, Walgreens has been displaying historic village images to promote a sense of community.

Community Involvement

Deerfield receives a very diverse spectrum of community involvement that consists of business, schools, artists and resident volunteers. Notably, our Fine Arts Commission is a nine member volunteer commission including residents with varying backgrounds. Jeffrey Marks is the current Chairman of the Fine Arts Commission and is an active trial attorney. He is a volunteer attorney for Lawyers for the Creative Arts, and is a Jeff Awards judge for Chicago area theatre (seeing and judging an average of 150 shows each year). He performs in the CBA political parody shows ("The Bar Show") and acts in many "industrials". Edwin Seidman is another member of the commission and has been an avid art collector for over 25 years. In addition, Mr. Seidman is publisher of Chicago/Midwest art fairs calendar, and provides weekly updates of past and upcoming art fairs. Dottie N. Fiedler has been a member of the Fine Arts Commission since its inception. Her interests are in theatre and theatre promotion and she has also volunteered at the old Art Institute Art Rental & Sales Gallery. Another distinguished member of the Fine Arts Commission is Beth Weis. For the past 13 years she has been a professional brick artist, working in LEGO. She is one of eleven people in the world who have turned their passion into a business and is a LEGO Certified Professional. She facilitates over 500 collaborative building events a year and builds sculptures in her free time. In addition to being a member of the Fine Arts Commission, Barbara Weisskopf was a docent at the Terra Museum of American Art for ten years while she studied art history. She still remains a passionate attendee of art museums, art galleries, art shows and artistic venues of all disciplines today. Fine Arts Commission meetings are also attended by members of the Deerfield Public Library and the Deerfield Park District. This Commission has served to provide a forum where enthusiastic supporters of the arts can meet and discuss innovative new strategies to promote art in order to improve the community.

The Fine Arts Festival has continued to be a success year after year. Corporate sponsors for this event include US Cellular, Whole Foods, 97.1 FM, Starland and the Deerfield Bakery. Every year, music is provided at the event either from a local band or from the Deerfield High School. Ultimately, the success of the festival has led to greater community involvement each year.

The Deerfield Park District and the Chamber of Commerce are also both actively involved in the Fine Arts Festival. The Park District provides for the Youth Art Fair component that consists of displaying art from elementary school to high school aged artists in Deerfield. The youth component helps to promote art in the schools, helps to increase community involvement and increase attendance at the event. The Chamber promotes the festival in their newsletter and spearheads the creation of a coupon book, which is distributed the day of the event to provide coupons to Village Center merchants tied to attendance at the art fair. The Chamber also partners with the Village to host an Artist Preview Party at Village Hall the Friday before the Arts Festival. Chamber members mingle at Village Hall and get a preview of the artists attending the fair. The preview party this year featured a brass quartet in the lobby for participants to enjoy.

Additionally, each summer two different concert series are held downtown. In June, five summer concerts were held at the Starbucks Plaza and this series was sponsored by the Village Music Store, Deerfield Village Center and Starbucks. During the month of July live music was performed each Thursday night at the Deerfield Square and sponsored by the property owners. It has been a great advantage to the Village to have such high levels of commitment and assistance from the private businesses in town in support of the fine arts.

The Village is currently working with owners of the property, Shoppers Court, to display even more public art. The Village is anticipating a mural to be displayed on the east wall of the restaurant the "Italian Kitchen" for this fall. Owners of the Shoppers Court are partnering with the artists from the Deerfield High School to create the mural. The Village has high hopes this project will serve as a catalyst to encourage more public art displays and murals throughout the Village.

For the last three years, the Village of Deerfield as well as the communities of Bannockburn and Riverwoods have actively been involved in a community-wide reading program known as "One Book, One Zip Code." This program reflects the Village's desire to include everyone in the 60015 zip code in a community reading event. Every few months an acclaimed book is selected for all participants in the community to read together. The Village has provided much support through the years for this program. The Village of Deerfield is a partner to this program and has provided space where discussions, lectures, and films related to the book could be featured. Deerfield has also provided cable TV broadcasts and financial support to ensure this valuable reading program continues.

Results

Almost everyone who lives in our Village has been impacted in some way by the integration of art into the community. Residents see sculptures around town, including at the mall, Village Hall, Library, Park District and at various businesses that bring enjoyment and raise the quality of life in our community. The Village's annual Fine Arts Festival is nationally recognized and demonstrates our commitment to the arts. This event has brought more artists into view of the public and has given them an opportunity to exhibit their art. The Village also purchases art each year to display in Village Hall. The Village's various programs provide support for all aspiring and current artists to develop their work and meet their full potential. The Village, with assistance of the Fine Arts Commission, has really excelled at fostering an art-positive policy and an environment that encourages the fine arts. The residents have always been the most important component of the Village's art-positive policy as they are the participants that make these events a success. The high number of volunteers and high rate of attendance at Village art events illustrate just how receptive residents are to the art programs the Village offers.