

## Organizers say Bridgeport's inaugural arts fest here to stay

Meg Barone, Correspondent  
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*The Bridgeport based band, Saint Bernadette, performs during the Bridgeport Arts Fest at McLevy Green in downtown Bridgeport, Conn. on Saturday July 17, 2010. Pictured is lead singer Meredith DiMenna and bass player Dan Carlisle. Not pictured is guitarists Joe Novelli and Keith Saunders as well as drummer Kenny Owens.*

BRIDGEPORT -- Booths containing the creative work of two dozen local artists sat along the perimeter of McLevy Green Saturday, while on the green itself there were music and dance performances and children's activities.

The artwork included paintings, photography, jewelry, and wine and beer. "Wine-making and beer-making are an art form, even though there is science behind it. There's a little bit of yourself in every beverage," said Tess Szamtulski, who with her husband, Mark Szamtulski, owns Maltose Express, of Monroe, and whose booth offered a taste of two handcrafted beers and two wines. "It's a culinary art," one person said.

And so went the first-ever Bridgeport Arts Fest, which attracted an estimated 1,200 people and prompted organizers to vow they would build on the inaugural event in years to come.

The fest was the brainchild of Don Eversley, director of Bridgeport's Office of Planning and Economic Development. Eversley has worked in New York and Providence and said those cities, and others, have successfully used the arts and culture as a tool for revitalization.



*Dr. Kristine M. DeMarco, center, talks about her artwork with Eleonore M. Herschberger, during the Bridgeport Arts Fest at McLevy Green in downtown Bridgeport, Conn. on Saturday July 17, 2010*

"Arts and culture have always been an important part of transforming a city," Eversley said. "There's an artists' community here in Bridgeport, which includes fine artists, crafters and musicians, but they have not had a lot of ways to be appreciated," said Eversley, who envisions the arts fest as an annual event.

In fact, next year he wants to incorporate a larger performing arts component, and he wants Bridgeport's fest to be "a bit hipper, more urban and a different flavor than what you have at the smaller towns' art festivals throughout Connecticut."

On Saturday, under the watchful eye of Luisa Guzman, an art teacher at the Neighborhood Studios of Fairfield County, children used sculpting wire to make odd-shaped bubble-makers. "Mom, watch this," said an excited William Page, 5, of Stratford, to his mother, Oriental Page, as he waved two bubble-makers simultaneously creating a stream of bubbles. His brother Nathan, 10, and sister Kaitlyn, 8, said they enjoyed making the unusually shaped contraptions.

Viewers enjoyed the art of Jeffries Moore, of Patterson, N.Y., who created paintings combining multiple music and art influences; Jo-Ann Thompson-Claybourne, of Norwalk, who creates art using a mixture of fabrics and paint on wood, pottery, jackets, T-shirts and bags; the photographic landscapes and seascapes of Jon Wason, of Bridgeport; and the paintings and portraiture of John Lawson, president and CEO of ArtLaw Productions in Bridgeport.

Of the Bridgeport Arts Fest, Lawson said, "It's a long time coming, and I hope there will be so much more."



*Artist Janelle Gordon sits with her artwork*

Kelly Rosenbaum, 11, of Bridgeport, and her friend Destiny Nunez Acosta, 19, of Haverhill, Mass., loved the artwork. Kelly especially liked Karl Heine's laser artwork. "It was a necklace and it was in neon colors," she said. Destiny approved of the booth for Beach Bum Sea Glass Jewelry. "It was such a good presentation. (The artist) had jewelry made out of sea glass displayed on real seashells. It was really nice," she said. Sandra Rosenbaum, Kelly's mother, said she appreciated the festival as a whole and hopes it is better attended next year. "Everyone should come. There's a lot to see," she said.



*Artist Brad Frasco, of Stratford, applies an airbrush tattoo for Jennifer Klicin, of Bridgeport, during the Bridgeport Arts Fest*