

Nancy and Milt Miller work on their letters at the McLean Project for the Arts volunteer open house Aug. 31.



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THE CONNECTION

By the Letter

McLean Project for the Arts recruits volunteers for annual ArtFest.

BY ALEX McVEIGH
THE CONNECTION

As the McLean Project for the Arts prepares for its annual ArtFest, staff hosted a volunteer gathering where guests were invited to make their contribution to the art on display.

The gallery had been completely cleared out, and several long tables were set up, each with a piece of poster board with a single letter on it. The letters spelled out "McLean [heart]s MPA ArtFest." Volunteers gathered around the letters, and were able to make each one a piece of art of their own making.

VOLUNTEERS used crayons, puffy paint, tissue paper, markers, watercolors and any other available art supply to make their masterpieces. Some even brought their own supplies.

"Our mission has always been to exhibit contemporary art and further the education of the principles of contemporary art," said Nancy Perry, the MPA executive director. "This volunteer open house will show people what a good time we have."

Perry introduced the honorary chairs for ArtFest, District Supervisor John Foust (D-Dranesville) and his wife Marilyn Jerome.

"McLean is a fabulous place to live, and it takes groups like the McLean Project for the Arts to create the sense of community we all love," Foust said. "This is a special event for us, and I'm so pleased to be able to support them."

Each guest teamed with a few others to make their letters stand out, and some even showed the influence of their favorite artists.

"I channeled my inner Lilly Pulitzer," said Genevieve Libby, who had the "L" in McLean. She used crayons to fill it with swirls, numbers, letters, and other items. "I came last year

with my mom, and she said 'Let's do it again!' Where else can you just sit down and color for a few hours?"

Marybeth Kelley and her group used tissue paper to color the entire poster except for the inside of the first "T" in ArtFest. She said "I'm a big fan of Eric Carle, so we gathered all the tissue paper we could find and put it to good use."

MPA STAFF said they were impressed with the turnout, which included dozens of people. As the last week before Fairfax County Schools open, often many people are on vacation.

"We've seen a lot of new faces, and it's a great turnout for the end of summer," said Debbie Jardot, development director for the MPA. "Coloring is a very relaxing way to spend an evening."

Volunteer opportunities are available before, during and after the day of the event, and also the day before, Oct. 2. Interested parties should contact Sandy Fennell at info@mpaart.org.

"It's a great way to get to know active, creative, nice people in the community, it's always a great time," Fennell said.

ArtFest will take place at McLean Central Park Sunday, Oct. 3 from 10:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. There will be 42 artists on display, as well as other entertainment. More information is available at www.mpaart.org.

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— Supervisor John Foust
(D-Dranesville)



Jane Frank shows off her completed letter at the volunteer open house Aug. 31 at the McLean Community Center.