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MPA Officials Gearing Up for Fall's Art Festival

by **BRIAN TROMPETER**, Staff Writer

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McLean Project for the Arts (MPA) leaders have invited a wide selection of exhibiting artists and will offer programs for young and old alike at its second annual MPAartfest on Oct. 5.

The free event will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at McLean Central Park, located at Dolley Madison Avenue and Old Dominion Drive. In case of inclement weather, the event will be moved inside the McLean Community Center.

"I have a direct line to the weather gods," event chairman Bari Levingston assured participating artists at a July 24 walk-through. "They've promised us good weather this year."

The expected 5,000 visitors may park at Dolley Madison Library and the McLean Community Center, or take shuttle buses from other locations.

Several jury members selected 40 artists from 60 applicants to participate in the event. Jurors evaluated the quality of the artists' work and tried for a wide selection of media, ranging from the usual painting and photography to furniture making, jewelry, quilts, ceramics and sculpture.

"Everything must be handmade," said Nancy Perry, MPA's executive director.

Artists will keep all of the proceeds from sales of their work. Donations and part of food-sales revenue will go to support MPA's art education programs.

Falls Church abstract painter Joyce McCarten, one of 16 artists returning for this year's event, told participating artists to bring plenty of their artworks. The event is well-organized and treated artists well, she said.

"You feel cared about," McCarten said. "It's not a money-making machine. It's for us."

MPA leaders are bringing back the Children's Walk, which will entice visitors from the library parking lot into the event. This walking area is sponsored by the McLean Citizens Foundation.

Another returning feature will be the Children's ArtTent, which will offer stations where youngsters can paint watercolors and make clay sculptures. The tent, which drew about 300 children last year, is sponsored by the McLean Rotary Club, New Dominion Women's Club and Dr. Deirdre Maull.

A new feature this year will be the Adult Art Walk, which will exhibit artworks made by local seniors. Also, MPA will offer an Art Smart area, located inside the triangle of artists' booths, where visitor can learn how to frame pictures, care for artworks and do other projects.

Organizers still are lining up sponsors for the event, including one for the gazebo in McLean Central Park. Hoping to make up for last year's one-time-only \$10,000 contribution from the McLean Community Center, event leaders are selling artist-booth sponsorships for \$300 apiece.

Those sponsorships "are great for small businesses," Levingston said. "It's an inexpensive way for them to get involved. We don't have any mega-sponsors, like Target. It's got to come from the community."

For more information, call (703) 790-1953 or visit www.mpaart.org.



Bari Levingston, chairman of the McLean Project for the Arts' 2008 MPAartfest, shows participating artists the modified booth layout and other changes planned for this year's event. (Photo by Brian Trompeter)