

Chalk it up to family togetherness

Via Arte entrants enjoy coming back every year

BY KELLY ARDIS
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“The family that chalks together, stays together” might not be an actual phrase that people say, but for the Tyack-Lacava clan, it’s true.

The Via Arte Italian Street Painting Festival, an annual event put on by the Bakersfield Museum of Art, is also an annual event for Dawn Tyack and her daughters, Carrie and Lauren Lacava, and her stepdaughter, Haleigh Tyack. This year, the family will return to the festival for the eighth time.

“It’s the highlight of my year every year,” Carrie Lacava said of Via Arte. “The family part is the best. We don’t get to do that much together, all of us. It’s fun, so much fun.”

The Tyack-Lacava family will work on one of 145 squares at The Marketplace this weekend at the public art event, which draws more than 400 artists, according to BMOA curator Vikki Cruz. The museum encourages artists to create work that “gives a nod to the masters,” she said via email.

Via Arte

When: Saturday and Sunday

Where: The Marketplace, 9000 Ming Ave.

Admission: Free to watch; \$15 for a 2-by-2 foot square in Via Bambino

The festival, now in its 16th year, is the museum’s largest fundraiser, she said, raising \$43,000 last year. Squares for local artists range in size from 4-by-6 feet to 12-by-12 feet and are paid for by sponsors. This year’s featured artist, Julie Kirk-Purcell, will complete a 15-by-15 foot three-dimensional piece.

Via Arte participants are drawn to the event by “the chance to work in front of an audience and talk about art, the festival and the experience,” Cruz said. “It’s also a great way for artists to build a relationship with other artists and share in this weekend-long event.”

Though festival veterans now, Dawn Tyack and Carrie Lacava said seeing others work at Via Arte has taught them a few techniques, and each year they push themselves to new challenges. Like many artists, their previous squares were copies of well-known pieces, like Caravaggio’s



CALIFORNIAN FILE

Lauren Lacava, front, works with her mother, Dawn Tyack, left, and sisters Haleigh Tyack and Carrie Lacava at the Via Arte Festival at the Marketplace in 2013. This will be the eighth year the family has participated in the festival.

“David and Goliath.”

This year, they’re creating an original for the first time, but keeping Via Arte’s Classical themes in mind. Their 8-by-12-

foot “Snake Skin Deep” piece will depict Medusa, a beautiful young woman turned monstrous villain as punishment for being raped by the Greek god Poseidon, looking

in a mirror at her former self. “We wanted to talk about body image and rape culture,” Tyack said. “We wanted to do some-

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Parting sweet sorrow for baker

BY STEFANI DIAS
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After a decade as part of the downtown food scene, cupcake and pastry shop Frosting Ink will close its doors Friday.

“Bakersfield has been good to me,” said Frosting Ink owner Sheila Heninger in an interview Tuesday. “The community has been really supportive. I need them to know I appreciate their loyalty and support through the years.”

Heninger said operating costs were too high at her Eye Street location, which she leased last year after leaving her longtime shop near the post office on G Street.

“I knew it was going to be hard, but we weren’t able to do it. ... It is hard to run a business downtown. We did really well at our other location. We didn’t know how much the post office helped us (for foot traffic).”

Heninger said her lease agreement included a loan for renovating the portion of the Hay Building she occupied. Those costs, she said, were \$10,000 higher than initially discussed.

“I took on way too much moneywise.”

Hay Building co-owner Eydie Gibson said Heninger was a “great asset” to the building but declined to discuss the financial arrangement on Tuesday. She said Tina’s Cookies N More will take over the space.

At first, Heninger said, special events shored up business at the new location.

“It started off pretty good. First Friday is what helped us. The people, later hours. That is what helped us make the rent.”

But summer proved a breaking point, as the heat kept people off the streets: “It was like a ghost town out here.”

After her husband, Alan, cashed out a life insurance policy and Heninger drained her savings to keep the business afloat, the business owner compared her sales to previous years and decided she needed to close.

Heninger was one of the first in town to embrace the cupcake craze, ignited by HBO’s “Sex and the City,” which introduced the world to Magnolia Bakery in New York. In the wake of that exposure, several chains cropped up in major cities, and Bakersfield followed the trend.

Customers discovered Heninger in 2002 when she first

sold cookies from Sub Station, owned by her mother, Maria Gueldner. By 2004, she expanded to cupcakes, launching her own counter at the sandwich shop.

Three years later, she sunk \$15,000 into equipment and start-up costs to open her first storefront on G Street, just several blocks west of her current location.

The business garnered national attention in 2010 by taking part in Food Network’s “Cupcake Wars.”

“We’ve had people drive from Utah, other states. They want to take pictures with us and taste (the cupcakes) just because it was on television.”

While some cupcake shops have closed over the years (Cupcakes n Crema, Buttercream Bakery & Cafe and Connie’s Kupcake Kreations) others have endured (Sweet Surrender and Gimmee Some Sugar), supporting Heninger’s belief that cupcakes are still a sweet escape.

“I don’t think cupcakes are ever going to fizzle out. There’s something about a cupcake. It’s just love, just happiness.”

Heninger said she has no regrets and is comforted by all the good memories from her years in business.



HENRY A. BARRIOS / THE CALIFORNIAN

Frosting Ink owner Sheila Heninger, right, with daughter Alexis in her downtown Bakersfield shop, which she will close Friday.

“It’s amazing how much love we received. Even (Californian dining columnist) Pete Tittl liked our stuff — and that’s saying something!”

“Being a part of so many people’s life events. We cater a wedding, then we do the baby shower. Then the kids come in. I’ve seen a family become a family. I’ll just keep that forever.”

“It was never a job, always a joy.”

Tina’s Cookies N More, the location’s new tenant, posted on Facebook it will open next week.

As for Heninger, don’t count her out of the business. After some much-needed rest and time with loved ones, she’ll look to the future.

“We may put our aprons back on. I have a couple of ideas brewing but I need to do a little more research.”

Having already worked as a preschool teacher, legal secretary and in the medical field, Heninger doesn’t limit her dreams.

“I’ve reinvented myself so many times, who knows what I’ll come up with next?”

Eye Street



PHOTO COURTESY OF BAKERSFIELD MUSEUM OF ART

Bakersfield artist Kevin Hardin won a prize at last year's Via Arte for his rendition (above) of an ancient Roman mosaic called "Gypsy Girl."

VIA ARTE

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thing that speaks to more than just the art itself."

They hope the message will resonate with visitors, and chances are they'll hear the feedback either way. Working with an ever-changing panel of would-be art critics behind them, Tyack said the interaction with guests is one of the things she enjoys about Via Arte.

"I prefer the pressure" of people watching us, Lacava agreed.

Crowd participation

For Bakersfield artist Kevin Hardin, the crowd is one of the best parts of the experience.

"I like when they're looking over my shoulder," said Hardin, who's back for his 15th year. "They respond and interact."

Hardin will create a 12-by-12 foot re-creation of Henri Fantin-Latour's "Portrait of Sonia." He chose the piece because he was captivated by the woman's eyes, a common theme in his work. Last year, his re-creation of an ancient Roman mosaic called "Gypsy Girl" won him first place in Artist's Copy, one of three awards — Visiting Artist and Original Art are the others — which this year will be chosen by celebrity

judge Bradford Solomon.

While children have the opportunity to work on their own 2-by-2 foot creations for \$15 at the event's Via Bambino, 9-year-old Madison McGuire will be participating in the big leagues on Hardin's team.

"If I know a little kid who is into art, I'll invite them to work on it," Hardin said. "It gets their feet wet, and then I can blame them if it doesn't look good," he added with a laugh.

Hardin estimates that he usually spends more than 24 hours total on his piece over the weekend. The work might be artistic, but it's physical too.

At the end of day one "I'm dead tired, beat up and dirty," Hardin said. "All the injuries start to manifest. I move back and see the artwork from (a standing) perspective. I'm up and down, up and down all day."

In many cases, the time a piece takes to complete is longer than the time the finished product will stay on the street. Artists must finish their work by Sunday afternoon, Cruz said, and all art is washed off Monday night.

Heartbreaking for the artists? Hardin and the Tyack-Lacava team said they aren't bothered.

The experience "is worth every second," Lacava said. "When it's over, I'm like, 'Ugh, why can't it be October already?'"

COMING SUNDAY IN EYE

Cal State Bakersfield is embarking on an ambitious project to celebrate the city's architecture of the 1930s, a fertile and imaginative time when giants like Richard Neutra and Clarence Cullimore Sr. designed structures, including the one at right, that have the power to awe and inspire us 75 years later. Find out how you can participate in an upcoming tour, symposium and exhibition that celebrates the era's designs and meet a Bakersfield homeowner who answers the question: What's it like to live in an architectural treasure?



PHOTO BY CLARENCE CULLIMORE SR.

Luigi's on Saturday is like Luigi's no other day (OK, it's always packed, but it's a different kind of packed). What drew restaurant critic Pete Tittl? The

chance to introduce a former student — who'd never been there! — to the pleasures of a Luigi's half and half.

Pete's also on the trail of a restaurant rumored to be coming to town. And this isn't any chain; it's the pet project of a celebrity chef.

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