

Gulfport Messenger

Newsletter of the Gulfport FL Merchants Association

November 2008

Member Highlight: Industrial Arts Center

Gulfport's image as an "Art Village" has been challenged in recent years by fewer artists being represented in permanent gallery and studio spaces. Still carrying the banner of working artists in Gulfport is Jackie Ballard, Faculty Director and Instructor at Gulfport's non-profit Industrial Arts Center, located at Beach Blvd. and 29th Ave. South in the Art Village Courtyard.

Jackie has been a Gulfport resident for over 12 years. Until recently, she lived and worked in a small studio space located in the alley behind what is now La Fogata on Beach Blvd. Always interested in teaching and passing on her love of art, Jackie conducted glass blowing classes through St. Petersburg's Arts Center, teaching students in her alley studio for a few years. About three years ago, Mike McKee and others from Gulfport's Culbertson Group, owners of the Art Village Courtyard, approached Jackie about the idea of an Industrial Arts Center in a dedicated location in which she could provide instruction in glass blowing and which would provide space for other artists to teach in their respective media.

After completing construction of the building in October 2007, the Industrial Arts Center (IAC) still lacked funds for the necessary equipment to begin operation. A generous grant from local philanthropist Beth Ann Morean enabled the IAC to purchase equipment and open their doors in April 2008.

A full slate of ongoing and occasional classes are offered in a variety of industrial arts media, including glass blowing (Jackie Ballard, instructor), glass fusing (Steven Schramek), lamp working (Fay Katherine), metal smithing (Brad Severtson), found metal sculpture (James Oleson), and jewelry making (Brad Severtson and Angel Pasquenucci). Other offerings have included wood turning and carving, and drum making, and other classes will be offered as other artists and funding become available. Sign-up forms for classes and more details are offered in person at the IAC or online at their informative website, IndustrialArtsCenter.org.

Member Highlight (continued)

The IAC is still a lean operation as it gets its legs and is actively seeking community participation and support. One current fundraiser is a "Name that Horse" contest. The 14-foot found metal horse sculpture, "Mustang," by artist James Oleson now resides in the Art Village Courtyard. The public is invited to offer suggestions for the name of the horse for \$1 per offer. Suggestion locations include the Industrial Arts Center, Java Nirvana, Yummy's, Dominic's Pizzeria, Peg's Cantina, Domain Food & Spirits, Pia's Trattoria, Gulfport on the Rocks, O'Maddy's, and others. Simply look for the voting jars. A random drawing will be held to determine the winning name and the winner will receive an artwork from one of the IAC's resident instructors.

Aside from classes, the IAC opens for artists' demonstrations during Gulfport's Art Walks and other events. Jackie's glass art, including ornaments, vases and "witch's balls," as well as the work of other IAC artists, is being offered for sale through an exclusive arrangement with Domain Home Accessories in Gulfport.

Another upcoming fundraiser will be held on December 7th. Participants are invited to work with IAC artists to make their own holiday gift out of glass, metal or wood for a \$25 contribution. Jackie encourages all residents who appreciate art in Gulfport to support the IAC by attending fundraisers, enrolling in classes, making tax-deductible donations and volunteering. According to Jackie, "We are all sacrificing to make this work, because we believe deeply in art's importance to our community and the personal lives of everyone it touches."

A Word from GMA Board President Mike McCue: "It Takes a Village"

The waterfront "Art Village" business district has been growing and changing for some time now. Over the past few years, the Gulfport Merchants Association has been working diligently to advertise, cultivate and create more traffic in downtown Gulfport. Hopefully, the results of this hard work are obvious.

“It Takes a Village” (continued)

But there is only a small percentage of merchants who are GMA members and who allow us to move forward in this way. We are at a critical place with a lack of participation by many merchants and we need your help now.

If you are not participating, ask yourself: Why shouldn't I be one of the members of our community that makes this progress possible? Or should I simply let others pay for this progress while I enjoy it at no cost?

When you think about your answers, let me recap just a few of things that are accomplished by our Merchants Association: 1) We hold two Art Walks each month with advertising in the *St. Pete Times* at \$240 per ad each week to a circulation of 310, 000 readers as well as press releases to dozens of other media outlets; 2) On non-Art Walk weeks, we continue to run advertising in the *Times* to increase traffic to downtown and promote individual merchants; 3) We pay an Events Coordinator to organize and promote Art Walks and other events, creating growth in vendor participation and customer traffic; 4) Tuesday Morning Market. No, it didn't just happen. The Merchants Association also created this with organization, advertising and press releases; 5) GeckoFest, our town's largest event, brings thousands to Gulfport every year and also supports our local AIDS Service organization; 6) We diligently pursued the installation of pavers for event vendors and lighted trees and electrification along Beach Blvd.; 7) We now carry \$1 million of insurance covering our events.

This is just some of what we do and pay for. So stand up and get involved. Where would your business and our community be without advertising, without promotion to the media, without Art Walks and events drawing thousands of customers to our streets? Do you benefit from this promotion and this customer traffic? Honestly, if you do, now is the time to help. Come on: **It takes a village!**

If you are already a member of the Gulfport Merchants Association, please accept our thanks for your support. To join GMA or renew your membership, please use the enclosed form which will also be used to update GMA's "The Secret Is Out" map and brochure of Gulfport.

Casino Windows Will Open for Merchant Displays

All Gulfport merchants are invited to offer one item from their shop or restaurant to be featured in the two large display windows located on either side of the Casino. Items to be featured must be able to fit inside the window and any participating merchant must offer free gift wrapping as a customer service (unless a gift certificate is the item to be featured). Each item will be displayed in a holiday-themed gift box. This new merchandising opportunity will be launched no later than Thanksgiving, in time to take advantage of holiday shopping traffic. For more information and to participate, contact GMA Board President Mike McCue at 302-9299 or mmccue@tampabay.rr.com.

Two Special Holiday Events

On Saturday, November 29th, the GMA is sponsoring a special Art Walk with a theme of "Shop Mom and Pop." From 10AM to 5PM during the busiest shopping weekend of the year (after Thanksgiving), this event will feature carefully selected vendors which will offer only American-made art and crafts. Advertising and promotion are being geared to highlight Gulfport's unique "non-chain" charms. The event will also support American troops overseas. Domain Food & Spirits and Gulfport On The Rocks will be collecting non-perishable snacks, toiletries, games and other items needed by the troops. (No cans or glass, please.) For more details, contact Suzanne King at 322-5217 or Gulfportevents@gmail.com. Vendor fees from the event will be used to ship donated items overseas. Merchants are encouraged to have their holiday decorations in place in time for this event.

Holiday festivities kick into high gear on Friday, December 5 with Gulfport's annual Downtown Holiday Celebration. Coinciding with the first Friday Art Walk, the Celebration will take place from 6:30 to 9PM. The jolliest elf of all, Santa Claus, will arrive in a festive style to include the new Gulfport-St. Pete Beach Trolley. Watch for snow on this special evening! Live holiday music will be performed in front of the Casino. And a special celebration at 7PM will celebrate the colorful Trolley and its new service providing transportation to tourists and locals between Gulfport and St. Pete Beach.

Two-Page *Gabber* Spread to Offer Discount Ads

Gulfport's weekly window on the world, *The Gabber* (circulation 13,000), will initiate a special two-page advertising section featuring Art Village district merchants in the coming weeks. The special ad section will recur every other week. All downtown merchants are invited to participate. Full-color as well as black and white ads will be available in assorted sizes at significantly discounted rates. The spread will also feature articles describing individual businesses and upcoming events with the text to be supplied by merchants or the GMA. For more information, contact Ken Reichart, publisher, at 321-6965 or Advertising@theGabber.com.

Gulfport Going Green

The GMA is adding yet another event to its monthly schedule. Hoping to draw a segment of the ever-growing "green conscious" population of consumers to our streets, we are organizing vendors for the fourth Saturday of each month with an emphasis on health and wellness, natural products and green, eco-conscious living. This will be a daytime event each month from 10AM to 5PM on Beach Blvd., beginning Saturday, December 27th. For more information, or to refer vendors who may be interested, contact GMA Treasurer, Leslie Gilchrist at 439-1485. Vendor applications can be downloaded from www.gulfportma.com.

Coming Up Soon

Sat. Nov. 15: Art Walk 6-10PM
Tue. Nov. 18: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Tue. Nov. 18: GMA Monthly Meeting
(postponed from 11/11;
@ Peg's Cantina)
5:30-6:30PM
Tue. Nov. 25: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Sat. Nov. 29: Shop Mom & Pop 10AM-5PM
Tue. Dec. 2: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Fri. Dec. 5: Art Walk 6-10PM
Fri. Dec. 5: Downtown Holiday Celebration
6:30-9PM
Tue. Dec. 9: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Tue. Dec. 16: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Sat. Dec. 20: Art Walk 6-10PM
Tue. Dec. 23: Fresh Market 9AM-3PM
Sat. Dec. 27: Going Green 10AM-5PM

GMA Meetings and Board

The Gulfport Merchants Association is a non-profit all-volunteer organization promoting a healthy business and arts community in downtown Gulfport. All members of the community, GMA members and non-members alike, are welcome to attend the monthly GMA meeting held on the second Tuesday of each month at 5:30PM (postponed until November 18th this month) at rotating locations. This month's meeting will be held at Peg's Cantina.

Please attend. Please involve yourself in the discussions and decisions that shape events and amenities in our community.

For more information, feel free to contact a GMA Board Member:

Mike McCue (Domain Home Accessories)
President (302-9299)
Mike McKee (Art Village Courtyard): Vice
President (459-1963)
Leslie Gilchrist (The Outpost): Treasurer
(439-1485)
Lori Rosso (Sea Breeze Manor): Board Member
(343-4445)
Mary O'Malley (Reef Dog Gifts & Grooming):
Board Member (323-7007)
Suzanne King: Events Coordinator (322-5217)

Something to Think About

"I never make stupid mistakes. Just very very clever ones."

John Peel