

ST. MARY'S County Times

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5, 2017

WWW.COUNTYTIMES.SOMD.COM

Priceless

IN LOCAL

**RACISM AT FOOTBALL
GAME INVESTIGATED**

IN EDUCATION

**ST. JOHN'S NAMED
BLUE RIBBON SCHOOL**

IN COMMUNITY

**BLESSING OF THE FLEET
TURNS 50**

Public Art Unveiled

Arts and Entertainment Take Hold

Photo by Laschelle McKay



Art is Flourishing in Leonardtown

By Laschelle McKay
Special to The County Times

The Arts and Entertainment District designation was a long time in the making but Leonardtown's 2013 designation has been the stimulus for an upswing of art in St. Mary's County. Nationally, Arts and Entertainment (A&E) Districts can be found in cities and towns of all sizes, each one uniquely reflecting a local mission, history, and cultural development.

Leonardtown's mission for the designation is to continue its revitalization efforts by enhancing its vibrant and diverse arts and entertainment venues and to give artists a place to come together in a collaborative atmosphere where creativity and inspiration are encouraged and nourished.

A huge milestone of the A&E designation is the unveiling this week of the first public art project initiated by the Leonardtown Arts and Entertainment District. Town Administrator, Laschelle McKay, told the County Times that in 2016 the town put out a call to artists for proposals for a public art project. The winning artist was Parran Collery, a Southern Maryland artist working in the medium of terra cotta clay tile and mosaic. Parran created a beautiful mosaic tiled bench entitled "The Naturalist's Bench." Funding for the bench was secured through a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council and the Commissioners of Leonardtown.

Parran drew inspiration for "The Naturalist's Bench" from her own artistic interest in observing the beauty and wonder of the natural world around us...discovering bits of flora and fauna...making art feel approachable. The theme of the bench design features small vignettes of nature depicted in swirls and arcs of vibrantly glazed tiles. "It is a visual wonderland, engaging to both children and adults. Elements of nature from the southern Maryland region will encourage visitors to sit and spend time looking closely at the details of the art," says artist, Parran Collery. Parran believes that the best public art projects have a powerful relevance to their place, a sense of intrigue and surprise, and a visually compelling design. Collery has certainly captured this concept in "The Naturalist's Bench". The public is welcome to

come and witness the unveiling at 5:45 p.m. at First Friday on October 6th, in front of the Town Hall at 22670 Washington Street.

Events of varied themes take place in Leonardtown year round. One prominent monthly event has certainly become First Friday. This month Pink Friday is the theme with an annual call to artists to decorate bra art for the "Uplifting Designs" cancer awareness fund raiser. In addition to the bra art contest the St. Mary's County Arts Council will be showing off its new offices located at 22660 Washington Street in the downstairs of the Leonardtown Arts Center. These offices will bring a larger presence to the Arts Council on a day to day basis as they carry out their mission of cultivating the arts to enrich the quality of life in the community. "The St. Mary's County Arts Council is pleased to take a leading role in fostering economic vitality through the arts," Michael Brown, President of the SMAC stated.

Being Southern Maryland's only A&E District has not only been inspirational to artists in Leonardtown but all over southern Maryland. Working in a close partnership with the St. Mary's County Arts Council we have seen the opening of numerous galleries showing local artists creations in St. Mary's County including the Lexington Park Library, branches of the Community Bank of the Chesapeake and Medstar St. Mary's Hospital. In Leonardtown, North End Gallery celebrates more than 30 years as a vibrant, cooperative gallery. This month Opal Art Gallery celebrates five years in Leonardtown. In recent years Yellow Door Art Studio, Wine and Design, Bella Music School, Fuzzy Farmers Market and Crazy for Ewe have emerged as thriving destinations for local art.

In May of this year the St. Mary's Community Development Corp. with the support of the Southern Maryland Heritage Area Consortium and the St. Mary's County Arts Council produced a beautiful mural designed by Lyn Wescoe at Great Mills Road and South Shangri-La Drive in Lexington Park, MD. The CDC is continuing to develop the Lexington Park Arts Park on Coral Drive in Lexington Park. This enhances the area that is already home to the highly successful Three Notch Theatre. Art is blossoming in St. Mary's County.



Photos by Laschelle McKay

