

Find out what's new at the Rotary Art Show

By Brian Babcock
For the Saratoga News

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Don't tell Debby Rice that nothing ever changes in Saratoga.

The slogan for the 51st annual Saratoga Rotary Art Show is "Come See All That's New!" With 80 new artists, wine tasting and a new vendor booth layout at West Valley College, this year's slogan may not be much of a stretch.

Rice said the Rotary Club e-mailed about 2,300 new artists to ask if they would be interested in applying to be a vendor for this year's art show.

"We really reached out to artists who had never been to our show," said Rice, the chairwoman for the event. She said it was a lot of work, "but it was a good thing."

This year's featured artist, Paul Loughridge, sculpted Mr. Saratoga, which is featured on the show's pamphlet and the Rotary's Web

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site.

Rice said she new she wanted Loughridge to be this year's featured artist after seeing his work last year.

"(His artwork) really appealed to me," Rice said. "It was just so different. It was his humor and ingenuity."

Mr. Saratoga, which stands 2 feet tall, is made of separate cast iron parts welded together, Loughridge said. His body is made from a cast iron drive gear, and the Saratoga emblem on his chest was taken from the trunk of a 1959 Chrysler Saratoga. His feet are ice crushers and his legs are springs from a motorcycle. The top of his head that looks like a green hat is actually the back of an old hair dryer.

Loughridge said he doesn't like to mix and match parts, and that's why he made both arms from matching ice cream scoopers. He also likes to make sure his pieces can stand up on their own without having to be bolted to plywood.

"People want it to stand up in their living room ... if it makes it to their living room. Actually, I don't know what people do with my stuff," he said.

Being this year's featured artist has given Loughridge and his artwork more exposure, he said. He's excited about the opportunity and said someone in his position would be silly if they weren't.

"I'm quietly grateful," he said. "It says something about my art."

Although he is the main attraction, Loughridge is only one of about 200 artists at this year's event, with some traveling in from as far away as Arizona, Nevada, Oregon and Washington.

Another artist who will have a booth at the show is Patty Lakinsmith, a jewelry maker who will be participating in the show for the second time. Lakinsmith expressed her delight in taking part in

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the event again by writing a blog in March titled, "Why I Love the Saratoga Rotary Club."

In the blog she writes, "The Saratoga Rotary Art Show is a very well-run show, and all aspects of it from the invitations to artists, to jurying, to the events on the day of the show are executed flawlessly ... and the artists feel well cared for."

The show will include mixed media, ceramics, glass, jewelry, paintings and photography.

One fan favorite from last year, Saratoga Idol, is also returning after hitting it big with event-goers last year.

"It was such a success," Rice said. "Everything kind of stopped when Idol was on. We wanted people to come and buy art, not just watch Idol. We were almost too successful."

To make sure Idol didn't take over this year's event, organizers spread out the times the 12 Idol contestants will perform. The first six contestants will perform at noon, the second batch of six at 2 p.m. and the winner will be announced at 3 p.m. The winner will receive a \$1,000 award.

Thia Megia, last year's winner, will also perform as a special guest. Rice said Megia has received a "bunch of gigs" thanks to winning last year's contest.

Rice said she hopes the competition will be successful this year, too, if only to bring in extra proceeds the Rotary Club can give back to the community. Over the last 50 years the Rotary Club has given away almost \$2 million to local nonprofits, she said.

Some of the 50-plus organizations that will receive grants from the art show include the Assistance

League of Los Gatos-Saratoga, Canine Companions for the Elderly, the Diabetes Society and Saratoga Union High School District.

"I think that people will have a really enjoyable day and, through their purchases, have a feeling that they have helped their community," Rice said.

The Saratoga Rotary Art Show will take place on May 4 at West Valley College from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

SARATOGA IDOL

Saratoga Idol finalists include:

- 9-year-old ballroom dancers William Stansbury and Jenny Sokolosky;
- 8-year-old violinist James Poe from Saratoga;
- tap dancers Annie Phillips and Steven McLellan, who emulate Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers;
- 14-year-old comedienne Sarah Kay from Saratoga;
- Los Gatos High School freshman and songstress Alexis Marie Forchette;
- Saratoga High School student, singer Maddie Reynolds;
- 12-year-old Sanjana Shukla from Saratoga, an a capella vocalist;
- Janis Joplin-esque singer Megan Blind;
- pop singer Audrey Haynes;
- 11-year-old vocalist Tushita Gupta from San Jose;
- "Celtic Woman" song stylist Beth Guido; and

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