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Sunnier skies greet Rose Lawn's attendees, vendors

by Jon Gargis
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Visitors to last year's Arts Festival at Rose Lawn had to contend with rain as they perused vendors' selections of pottery, paintings, photography and more. Attendees at this weekend's 35th-annual offering at 224 W. Cherokee Ave. in Cartersville, however, got nothing but sunny weather, which is expected to continue as the festival concludes today from noon to 5 p.m.



The two-day event, the first day of which spanned from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, has attracted about 100 vendors from across the Southeast -- including in-state locations, Florida, North and South Carolina -- and even as far as Kansas. Festival co-chairwoman Jennifer Wiggins Matthews said that of this year's vendors, an estimated 30 percent of them are newcomers to the event.

"That's a nice mix, because sometimes people say, 'I know every vendor that's there.' Well, they don't, because we have a lot of new vendors here," Matthews said.

Among the newcomers was Kalen Redmon, owner of Limon Verde of

Marietta with her husband, Kevin, who won the Best in Show Award with her handcrafted jewelry.

"I'm very surprised and very humbled by it," Kalen Redmon said about winning the award. "It's my first time here, so I was just actually happy to have the opportunity to even come today and display my jewelry, so this is just an affirmation that I can do this and I can do it for the long haul.

"Another merchant at another event suggested [the Arts Festival] for me, and I have family that lives around this area, and she's telling me how good the events are and how people come out and support vendors," Redmon added about what led her to participating this weekend. "I've seen a lot of people come through, and everyone has a different perspective -- some people like what they see, some people have a suggestion for something I should make in the future. I had a lady

ask me to do the fleur-de-lis for football. I've had suggestions from men asking me for cufflinks, which I should I guess do now. It's completely worth it -- it's worth having my designs and having people wear them and send me pictures or come back and tell me how they got compliments on it."

Seven vendors in all earned a total of \$1,000 in prize money for being selected among about 40 contestants in the juried judging. Another award winner was Eddie Smith of Waleska, who creates "functional stoneware" in his Salacoa Valley Studio. The glazes he uses are food-safe, and the pieces he creates can be placed in the dishwasher and microwave.

"I've seen [potters] who were quite successful at this show," said the second-year vendor who won third place in the Heritage Crafts category. "Other people in different crafts who have made a success include Rose Lawn as part of their festival season.

"As a potter, as someone who is a crafter, you definitely have to weigh out what shows are going to give you the biggest bang for your buck," Smith added. "This is an in-town neighborhood, and there's a good stream of traffic going through here, and it's been around for 35 years -- those are the kind of things that make for a successful show for someone."

Fellow potter Darrell Adams was also displaying and selling his work Saturday. But unlike Smith, he has a long history with Rose Lawn's festival that has continued even after moving out of the state.

"My grandfather [W.J. Gordy] was a potter, and he moved to Cartersville in 1935. That's how I moved to Cartersville in 1985, to work with my grandfather, and then I ended up living in Cartersville for 20 years," said Adams, an Arts Festival vendor since 1986. "I moved back to my hometown about four years ago, to Gainesville, Fla., it's where my parents are, so I come up to Rose Lawn every year because I have a lot of loyal customers. It's always a good chance to sell some pottery.

"I think the unique thing about [my work] is that I fire with wood, and when you fire with wood, the fire creates its own patina, its own effects, and so it modifies the glazes and creates its own colors," he added. "Most people use an electric kiln or a gas kiln -- this is a lot more labor intensive because you're feeding wood into it, but it creates really unique effects."

The pottery selections of Adams and Smith were likely some of the sights of the festival taken in by Linda Brunt of Cartersville. She mentioned the artwork as one of the things she came to look for Saturday with her husband, Neal.

"I like to come have lunch, I like to walk around, I like to see what's for sale, I like to look at the pottery," Linda Brunt said. "I enjoy seeing the music and the dance and the young people with the things that they do. I like to see the community out here. It's well organized, they have a good variety of vendors, good variety of food that they sell. It's just a great afternoon."

"We've been coming here 20 years," Neal Brunt said. "We try to come every year. It's just an event we look forward to every year. We're within walking distance, so we'll come Saturday and Sunday, maybe stay an hour or so and look around and leave. I've been to a lot of these kind of shows like this, and this really is one of the best ones I've seen for a small town."

In addition to artists, the festival -- sponsored by Bartow County government and Cartersville Medical Center -- also includes live entertainment, an annual book sale hosted by the Cartersville chapter of American Association of University Women, and a plant sale by the Bartow County Master Gardeners.

Throughout the festival, patrons also can partake in \$4 guided tours of the 18-room Victorian museum that is the former residence of the late Methodist evangelist Sam Jones and now features the belongings of his family and teacher, Rebecca Felton.

Parking is available at the Cartersville Civic Center or the Frank Moore Administration and Judicial Center; attendees will be able to take advantage from those sites complimentary shuttle rides to Rose Lawn's grounds.

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