

AMISH ACRES
Historic Farm & Heritage Resort
Nappanee, Indiana
Arts & Crafts Festival
Where Arts meet Folk & Folks meet Art



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Artists are bullish about Amish Acres Festival

NAPPANEE, Indiana, - July 21, 2010 – Just as RV workers are returning to their jobs in Elkhart County, a nationally newsworthy event, artists and craftsmen from across the country are competing again to exhibit at Amish Acres Arts & Crafts Festival. The 2009 event jumped eight slots to the 12th Best Show in Sunshine Artist magazine’s national ranking.

The roster of 320 artists and craftsmen, up over 10% from a year ago, trek from 32 states and 296 cities to become part of the Marketplace surrounding Amish Acres historic farm’s pond each year. It is appropriate that nearly all of them will arrive in an RV, over half having been built nearly next door. “No matter where you buy an RV, there is a pull to visit where it was made. “Every year hundreds of artists and visitors to the festival plan their repairs and factory visits to coincide with the festival,” said Richard Pletcher, founder of the festival, “It’s almost a homing instinct.” The rolling caravan comes from New York to California; from Florida to Minnesota. Strong contingents include 17 exhibitors from Missouri, 13 from Wisconsin, and 33 from Illinois. Keith and Pam Alexander return with their cutting boards from Calimesa, California for their third year. For the last 18 years they have exhibited in nearly 30 shows each year.

Reflecting the exuberance of area visitors, the festival’s theme is “I’m half crazy, over the love of art”, inspired by the bicycle built for two that will be given away to festival visitors by drawing.

Although the Amish community sees little new about the nation’s sudden obsession with “Green”, artists are becoming more conscious of the resources they use. Chris Dykes and Denise Bell of Hulbert, Oklahoma who make lavender shea butter till fields that are certified organic. Paula Blankenship of Mansfield, Ohio who also makes natural bath and body products with essential oils and herbs has been featured in Country Living Gardener magazine for her commitment to natural ingredients. Susan Myers from Hillsboro, Tennessee, uses old American silver and copper coins to create her jewelry collected through her travels. She won the 2009 Artists’ Choice Award at the Wyandotte Street Art Fair in Michigan.

A large segment of the marketplace is made up of retired professional who have found a satisfying second avocation. Paul Van Duyn from Anderson, Indiana is representative of this group. He retired as a General Motors engineer with thirty patents to his name. He now designs and crafts functional garden lanterns from solid copper and brass.

In keeping with Amish Acres historic mission, several exhibitors will be using century old tools, machines and methods to hone their crafts. Coming from Roanoke, Texas, Don Mabry is bringing Shaker style oval boxes and carriers made with the 200 year old methods of the Shaker community. Dennis Drake's twisted walking sticks are made on 117 year old lathe. Carlos Vega of Antioch, Tennessee, carries on the tradition of Native American wind flutes.

There is an international flair to a number of the booths in the marketplace. Jim Zhang now from Norcross, Georgia creates authentic Asian graphic paintings. He graduated from Shanghai Art Academy in Shanghai, China with advanced art studies in Tokyo, Japan and Berlin, Germany. He has won the first place purchase prize and best in show in the Cedar Valley Arts Festival, Georgia. Another 2009 first place winner is Jeff Yuhas, of Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, whose hand thrown pottery was cited at Wo-Zha-Wa Days in the Wisconsin Dells.

The show's popularity comes from its proven ability to draw enthusiastic customers to the exhibitor's booths. Cindy Allen comes prepared with an inventory of nearly 800 pieces of unique items. She has been painting sundresses for 18 years in themes inspired from her garden.

Linda Bennet, South Bend, who was inducted into the Hall of Fame last year, returns for her 26th year with her popular oil paintings. She is joined by 47 artists returning for their second year and 70 newcomers who aspire to her longevity and success.

Admission charge is \$7 per adult, \$6 for seniors, students 12 – 17, and military. Children under 12 years are free. Tickets may be purchase on line in advance for \$6 at AmishAcres.com. Special festival savings are available through discount vouchers available at all Martin's Super Markets throughout northern Indiana. All entertainment is free with gate admission. Free parking is available. Pets are not allowed on festival grounds. Amish Acres is located on Highway U.S. 6, one mile west of downtown Nappanee, Indiana. For more information call 800-800-4942 or on line at AmishAcres.com.

NOTE TO EDITORS: Richard Pletcher, founder and CEO, is available for interview. Coverage invited.

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