

Senior set urged to paint, sing, write

What: ArtFest55: A festival celebrating the creativity of people 55 and older

Where: Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center) at 1517 Bayliss in Midland.

When: June through September

For more information: Call (989) 837-1885 or visit www.becreative360.org



Midland – If you are between 55 and 105, it's time to pick up your watercolor brushes again, dust off the strings on your guitar or write a poem about the joys of attaining senior citizen status.

This summer, Midland's Creative 360 (formerly Creative Spirit Center), 1517 Bayliss, hosts ArtFest55, open to Saginaw, Midland and Bay County residents ages 55 and up.

Noting achievement in the arts can begin at any age, the festival features a juried art exhibit, a talent show and a creative writing competition -- all with prizes.

"At the end of 2009, Creative 360 hosted an exciting one-woman show, an exhibit of art by 79-year-old Midland artist Barbara Zimmerman," says Sarah Gorman, creativity director.

"Her work was so vibrant, inventive and diverse that we were inspired to showcase the work of others 55 and older in a summer-long event. We love the idea of a festival which brings together the visual, performing and literary arts. Our mission has always been focused on the integrated arts, and ArtFest55 embodies that vision."

In addition to the art contest, talent show and creative writing competition, Zimmerman will teach a two-day painting workshop using spray paint, stamps and glitter. The documentary "Young@Heart," about a senior citizen chorus ages 76 through 96, will be screened, followed by a panel discussion. And other festival events include a camp for grandparents and several wellness classes.

“What I am most excited about is the ‘Senior Moments’ talent show,” says Janet I. Martineau of Saginaw, serving as co-chair of the festival with Rosemary Hayes of Birch Run. “We’re seeking singers, dancers, musicians, comedians, actors, and jugglers to sign up, and planning on an ‘American Idol’-style panel of judges.

Acts can be solo or groups, she said of the Friday, July 16, event -- playing twice, at 2:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. “We’d love to discover our own Susan Boyle, but seasoned performers are welcome as well.”

Hayes, a watercolor instructor, is hoping some of her many art students at retirement facilities and at Saginaw Valley State University’s Osher Lifelong Learning Institute will enter the “Anniversaries: Looking Back, Looking Forward” juried art exhibit.

She is, she says, often amazed by many of them -- especially the newcomers who surprise her with their long-hidden talents. “It is exciting and inspirational to engage creative seniors in a social event which promotes the arts,” she says.

“Anniversaries” will be on display June 18 through Sept. 6 at the center. Hayes also will teach two watercolor classes during ArtFest55.

“Sentimental Journeys” is the name of the creative writing contest, which seeks poems, short stories and memoirs. Its winners will be published in a booklet form.

Judges for the three competitions are seniors themselves from the mid-Michigan area.

Chemical Bank Trust Department and Independence Village of Midland are sponsoring the summer-long festival.

More information on the rules, entry deadlines (late May and early June), planned prizes and judges is available online at www.becreative.org (on the home page, bottom left). Or call (989) 837-1885 to request a printed version by mail.

About Creative 360:

Creative 360, (formerly Creative Spirit Center), is a not-for-profit community arts and wellness organization founded in 1994. The Center’s mission is to create an environment for people of all ages to experience the creative process through ongoing classes, art exhibits, events, concerts, speakers and outreach programs; and its goal is to enhance the development of physical, mental and spiritual wellness through the arts and humanities. Visit www.becreative360.org for more information about the offerings at Creative 360, or call (989) 837-1885 to request a copy of the current schedule.

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