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Todd Hull/Staff

Barbara Rush, winner of last year's Spirit of the Show award, stands among some of her paintings.

IT'S A STREET PARTY

Local artists show off their wares

By Caroline Gray
North Fulton Neighbor Staff Writer

Roswell resident Barbara Rush has already won an award at the Alpharetta Arts StreetFest, and the festival is still over a week away. Ms. Rush won the pre-festival Spirit of the Show award for her participation in the event last year and a painting from her Tao of Equus Series will grace this year's festival T-shirt. According to festival juror and judge Kathy Ann Kessler, the award winner is chosen from the top 15 or 16 entrants for their promotion of the event the year before and for embodying the community aspects of the show.

"When they called to tell me I'd won, I just started crying I was so excited," said Ms. Rush. "I had no idea there was such a thing. It really blew me away and I thought that the T-shirt aspect was totally cool."

The annual festival is a juried show that will take over downtown Alpharetta from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 19 and 20. A first-time participant last year, Ms. Rush said she moved to the area for the strong arts community. A graphic designer at her day job in Duluth, the painter displays her art at Two Doors Art Studio and Gallery in historic Roswell.

Her original paintings feature a bold palate of horses in geometric patterns, which Ms. Rush was inspired to create only three years ago by an exhibit at the High Museum of cubist paintings and drawings. As a lifelong avid equestrian, she decided to use the technique to paint horses.

"Horses are wonderful for me because of their muscle movement and how their structure changes as they slow down or speed up and I wanted to pull that out and deconstruct it," she said. "An art purchase should be meaningful and people who ride or just love horses connect with my paintings. People also say they're restful on the

eyes because of the geometric shapes."

Ms. Rush will be selling her paintings as well as original pictograms at her booth at the festival. She said the event is a great opportunity for artists to meet their clientele and also to get to know each other.

Out of nearly 300 entrants, awards will be given out for Best in Show and two Honorable Mention awards the first morning of the festival. According to Ms. Kessler, the process to compete in the juried show is highly competitive.

"All of the artists must submit photos and I know I'm a stickler," she said. "If they're making jewelry, I want to see worked stacked in the background and soldering irons. Most artists aren't neat and the art has to match the photo."

“ I really feel honored to receive such a nice award. ”

-Barbara Rush

Besides handmade jewelry, Ms. Kessler said the festival attracts a wide variety of entrants and types of work. Primitive to high-gloss pottery, photography, blown glass and other handicrafts will be on display.

The art may be the reason for going, but there are many reasons to stay at the festival.

The event will include many art-related activities for children, festival cuisine and children's theater performances courtesy of Kudzu Playhouse.

Downtown shops and restaurants will also be open and attendees may discover places they never knew existed.

"I own Galerie and the Art of Dressing at the corner of Main Street and Milton Avenue and I can tell you merchants love the festival," said Ms.

Kessler. "I get hundreds of people coming in and saying, 'I never knew this was here. It's wonderful.'"

Alpharetta Arts StreetFest is free and open to the public and will take place in downtown Alpharetta on Milton Avenue.

Information: visit www.alpharetta.ga.us, www.barbararush.com.

2008 Session wrap BILLBO KEPT A

By Caroline Gray
North Fulton Neighbor Staff V

Tax reform and transportation bills were the toughest session but a few major pieces of legislation affecting north Fulton made it past the gauntlet.

House Bill 975 passed the state Senate unanimously March 31 and will make it illegal for Fulton County to backdate permits for up to 75 billboards in Johns Creek, Milton and Sandy Springs. The bill was sponsored by District 50 state Rep. and Speaker Pro Tem Mark Burkhalter, R-Johns Creek, who said he was worried as the session drew to a close the bill might not pass.

"I'm very happy the billboard bill passed," said District 48 Rep. Harry Geisinger, R-Roswell, a co-sponsor. "The county was doing as far as I was foolish. And I'm glad we got legislation to prevent such."

The bill now goes to Gov. Roy Barnes for his signature. District 11 Rep. Moody, R-Johns Creek, sponsored legislation that will allow the state to determine whether money from toll districts, intended for school construction, should be used for redevelopment statewide referendum in November.

"The people who are saying that you're taking money from schools," said Moody. "That's not the case because if you didn't have the referendum you wouldn't have increased tax revenue for schools. It looks like a win-win scenario."

In February the Georgia Supreme Court ruled TADs could not be used for anything but schools and the Alpharetta City Council held. According to Moody, the referendum was voted through, it is up to the legislature to authorize counties or housing authorities to use state funds for redevelopment.

The House and Senate passed tax reform, including a plan to eliminate car tag. Moody said he was disappointed the legislature was no able to pass a bill for Georgians as the country enters a likely recession, but it is the best.