

Hammond celebrates art culture

theater, paintings, photography, music displayed through town

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Jackie Konczol, instructor of Painting with a Twist, paints an original painting of a flamingo.

A collaboration of the arts was presented in downtown Hammond as photography, paintings, theater, music and more filled the streets.

Hammond celebrated its fifth annual Art in April on Friday, April 4 from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. The city became a Louisiana Cultural District in 2009, allowing artists to sell their work without added taxes. Art in April is one showcase of our cultural district and the many artists within it.

“I think we’ll always maintain that without a problem because we have hundreds of local artists, and now regional people are coming in because we have things like this,” said Terry Lynn Smith, executive director of the Downtown Development District. “Hammond has the most outstanding business community that I’ve ever experienced. Anytime you have that activity, there’s a spirit about it.”

There were more than 40 regional artist exhibits featured, and many were featured at popular locations including Bayou Booksellers, Berry Patch Café, Nortech Development and much more. Musicians took the floor at La Caretta, Tacos and Beer, Cate Street Pub and others, adding to the fun atmosphere as community members enjoyed food and drink.

Many businesses took part in giving wine to those who purchased the Art in April wine glass. Others, including Rotollo’s Pizzeria, offered a raffle where money for their restaurant could be won.

Imagine Boutique featured Kali Norton’s photography, bringing to life a partnership between the two. “I’m not originally from Hammond, so it’s good to get my name out this way,” said Norton. “The girls are really great. I’m actually going to be doing the photos for their website, so we’re kind of partnering up.” Norton features many different styles of photography including families, weddings, babies, seniors and more. She began photography three years ago after graduating from Southeastern in liberal arts.

“I love that Hammond does this. I love the way they support businesses,” said Norton. “It’s really great they do that. It’s a laid-back atmosphere where people can hang out.”

An outdoor play was enjoyed, courtesy of The Octavians, a young performance group who put on "The Tales of King Arthur." The Octavians is a group of young people from seven to 17 who learn different aspects of theater production such as acting, makeup, costumes and more. Later on, they are given the opportunity to perform their own productions.

The Octavians have performed before at other DDD events, but never at Art in April. "This is our first time being here for Art in April. I think it's wonderful and having an art event every quarter is really good. We're very appreciative," said Anna Pfeil, executive director of the Octavians. "We hope it's something that catches on and lots of people come out and discover Art in April."

Art in April is one of a few downtown events put on through the DDD. To learn more about upcoming DDD events visit their webpage at dddhammond.com.