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## Parks take on art gallery feel for two-day fest

By Hali Bernstein Saylor  
Boulder City Review

For two days, Bicentennial, Escalante and Wilbur Square parks will be transformed into an art gallery as Boulder City Hospital Foundation presents Art in the Park.

The 52nd annual event will be held from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday and feature 313 fine artists and craft vendors from primarily the Southwestern United States.

"There is a genre for every taste," said Tom Maher, CEO of Boulder City Hospital. "There are a lot of very creative people in Clark County and they have the ability to produce work to satisfy the taste and decor of the most discriminating artists, art connoisseur or designers."



*Photo courtesy Boulder City Hospital Foundation Awards for the top three fine art, fine craft and traditional craft participants will be awarded at Art in the Park.*

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The juried art show typically attracts around 100,000 people. Maher said many professional interior designers attend the show and purchase art for their clients or their own homes.

First-, second- and third-place awards are presented in the fine art, fine craft and traditional craft categories, as well as an overall Best in Show winner.



"We try to recognize as many worthy artists as possible," he said.

"I call it the greatest show on Earth," said Michael Dechape, who, along with his wife, Brenda, makes organic bath and body products from scratch.

Dechape said Art in the Park is the only show their company, Aravah Organics, participates in.

"We have always been blessed to sell out our products. People stand in line for it," he said, noting that his sales have doubled since they first participated in the show four years ago.

He said the atmosphere in the park, the people who come and the people who organize the event combine to make it special.

Dechape said their company, which embeds wildflower seeds into its soap wrappers, won a first-place award in the contemporary crafts category two years ago and came in second place last year.

On average, the two-day festival raises about \$165,000 for the hospital, Maher said. "In the past it has ranged from a low of \$140,000 to a high of \$210,000. It's a very valuable event for the hospital," he said.

Maher said the money goes into the hospital's general account and will be used to help with the loan it received from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"Part of the conditions of our loan was we would achieve and maintain a certain level of cash reserves. The money we make gets us to that point," he said. "We need to keep making money through events like Art in the Park and private donations to achieve the conditions of the loan."

He said the hospital doesn't receive any money from the artists selling their wares, except for the initial booth rental fee.

Its proceeds come from operating the park and ride service and the sales of hospital-related apparel, frozen treats and beer and wine.

"Yours truly will be mixing bloody marys as I do every year," Maher said.

The festival will feature more than 25 food and beverage vendors. One of the highlights of the show is a raffle, with each artist contributing an item. Also, the raffle features prizes donated by local businesses and Chamber of Commerce members.

In all, prizes worth more than \$25,000 will be awarded. The festivities also include live music and activities for children. To help alleviate congestion in the downtown area surrounding the parks, the hospital offers parking and a shuttle service from the outlying area.

There is a \$10 fee per vehicle.

Admission to Art in the Park is free. For more information, call 702-293-0214.