

'We never thought of ourselves as creating a local legacy until our 50th Anniversary, when we celebrated our service to our community. At our celebration, Mayor Ben Nelson, spoke about all we've accomplished, including our Festivals. We realized just how remarkable our legacy is and what the Festivals and our organization have given to our community.' said President, Susan Bridges .

On the weekend of February 11-12, artists will set up their booths at the Promenade at Bonita Bay and dazzle the public with their talent. Bonita Springs welcomes hundreds of nationally and internationally-known artists during the Bonita Springs National Art Festivals. Ranked high nationally and known to artists as one of the best in the country, many apply, with only 211 accepted by a tough jury panel. That means you get the best-of-the-best to see, an unparalleled and excellent collection of original artwork.

Yet, these great Festivals are a lot more than one weekend in January, February and March. They're about 365 days a year, every year, for 13 years. That's a lot.

The Bonita Springs National Art Festivals have given identity and brought recognition to Bonita Springs and Southwest Florida, giving the City of Bonita Springs its largest cultural events. 'A community's sense of place, its unique 'fabric' is not a static concept; it evolves and develops over time. The Festivals helped shape, reveal and enhance our identity, the unique meaning, value and character of our community.' said Operations Director, Kathy Saldivar

Yet primary importance is what the proceeds of these high-ranking, national Festivals help put back into the community, shaping both our present and future:

- Local Elementary Schools receive over \$20,000 worth of visual and performing arts programming annually with free programs like 'Art Goes to School' and 'After School Express'
- Residents and visitors enjoy over \$90,000 worth of free national, regional and local exhibitions
- Local youth and adults receive over \$20,000 worth of free Community Theater Programs with full scale productions throughout the year
- Local high school students receive over \$7,000 worth of free sculpture and painting classes annually with Center's High School Mentor Program
- Local high school, middle and elementary school students receive over \$6,500 in free exhibitions, receptions and award programs annually
- Local youth receive over \$60,000 in scholarships annually to participate in visual and performing arts programming
- Local families receive over \$5,000 worth of free Saturday Family Activity Days annually, featuring docent tours, hands-on art projects, and a film series
- Free annual 'Arts WorldWide' festival featuring visual and performing arts by artists from countries and cultures around the world; this festival, with a budget of over \$10,000, fosters understanding, literacy, and sensitivity to the many cultures that make up our diverse community

So, from both the artists' and residents' point of view, what would be lost if these festivals weren't here? A lot.