

# Artisphere enhances quality of life in city

By Brad Campbell

Each spring, Artisphere is proud to play a key role in showcasing Greenville as a great place to live and visit. Now in only its fifth year, Artisphere is already ranked 46th out of 600 fine arts festivals in the country by Greg Lawler's "Art Fair Sourcebook" and as a Top 20 Event by Southeast Tourism Society.

The festival attracts many thousands of our citizens and thousands of visitors who enjoy Greenville's "arts destination weekend." It is a weekend when all kinds of art are accessible to everyone. The West End is filled with visual art, performance artists and great food. In collaboration with some of Greenville's other arts organizations, there are wonderful performances by both local and visiting artists.

The presence of a strong arts community has a huge impact on the economic development of a community and its tourism efforts. Artisphere has been successful every year since its beginning and, every year it has grown, increasing both its size and the diversity of its arts offerings. Last year, 100,000 people attended the festival.

Artisphere, however, strives to be more than just a successful festival. It strives to have a positive impact on the economic development of our community. Events like Artisphere do much to enhance our quality of life and help promote our economic development and tourism.

This year, Artisphere has a new date, Friday, May 8, through Sunday, May 10. The second weekend in May was chosen in an effort to attract even more great visual artists by finding a weekend with few competing arts festivals. Clearly, the change in date was successful with a 38 percent increase in applicants for a slot on Artists Row. Only 100 artists were chosen by juried selection from a field of 585 applicants.

Other visual arts highlights include The Artists of the Upstate Exhibition at Centre Stage which spotlights our local visual artists. Presented in collaboration with Metropolitan Arts Council and Centre Stage, the exhibition runs from April 8 until May 29. Fifty-four of our best local artists have their work on display for viewing or purchase. Last year, 40 artists were chosen to exhibit by juried selection and more than \$8,000 in artwork was sold during the Exhibition.

This year's Artisphere poster was created by local artist, Judy Verhoeven and was unveiled at the Exhibition's Opening. See ARTS on page 11A

## ARTS

FROM PAGE 10A

Reception. Artisphere posters will be for sale during the festival.

The Chairman's Gallery Exhibit is new this year, part of Artisphere's ongoing effort to broaden its art offerings. Located in the Founders Room at the

## VOICES

Peace Center, it will exhibit art selected by Hampton III and Jerald Melberg Galleries for viewing and sale. Well-known artists, such as Carl Blair and William Halsey, will be featured.

Our performing arts events are better than ever, too. Artisphere is collaborating with the Peace Center in presenting Grammy Award winning singer-songwriter,

Suzanne Vega, on Friday night at the Peace Center's outdoor Amphitheatre. Saturday and Sunday will feature performances by a number of our local performing artists.

In addition, a new film component has been added to the festival. The Peace Center will present Southern Art Federation's Short Circuit Traveling Film Festival in Gunter Theatre on Saturday and

Sunday. Short films by filmmakers from around the Southeast will be shown. Of course, a festival favorite, Brian Olsen, will perform his "Art in Action" all weekend long in Falls Park.

Artisphere's Arts Partner program will once again enlist the assistance of volunteers from local nonprofit arts organizations. Last year, over 600 volunteers worked on the

festival weekend and, without these volunteers, Artisphere couldn't be what it is. To date, Artisphere has contributed over \$50,000 of festival proceeds to these organizations to thank them and to help promote our fine arts community.

Make plans to be part of Artisphere on May 8 through May 10, the weekend when Greenville becomes the arts destina-

greenvilleonline.com 11A

tion in the Southeast. Come down to the West End and enjoy great art, great performances, great food and this great place where we live. Visit our expanded Web site for more information about the festival and about all of the arts offerings in Greenville on that weekend. By the way, we hope that our new date brings sunny skies!