

## VOICES

### THE GREENVILLE NEWS EDITORIAL

# Artisphere puts spotlight on Greenville

**A**rtisphere, which turns a healthy 5 years old this year, has helped put Greenville on the nation's arts map. The festival is one of the reasons that Greenville won a spot in the 2009 edition of John Villani's much-consulted book, "The 100 Best Art Towns in America."

That designation came on top of other accolades garnered in recent years by the Artisphere, which begins today and runs through Sunday.

Among this year's special events is a concert by eclectic performing artist Suzanne Vega at the Peace Center Amphitheatre tonight.

The main attraction, as always, is the huge street festival in downtown Greenville and the West End featuring music outdoors and 100 visual artists exhibiting and selling their works. A wide variety of works will be of-

fered for sale, including painting, ceramics, photography, glass, jewelry, metalwork, sculpture, woodwork and furniture. In addition to the artist booths in the West End, indoor galleries along Main Street and in the West End will feature artworks.

Outside during the daylight hours, continuous entertainment will be featured at the Peace Center Amphitheatre while the Culinary Arts Cafe & Stage features blues, folk rock and indie music.

Local restaurants also will serve up some of their finest recipes at the festival.

The Kidsphere children's area, meanwhile, will provide fun and artistic activities for the whole family. (Festival hours are: Friday, 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.; Saturday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.)

Look also for numerous street performers during the event. About 100,000 people attended the festival last year over three days — and that number increases every year.

In recent years, Artisphere earned other honors, including being named a "Top Twenty Event" by the Southeast Tourism Society. Two years ago, the festival was designated a "winner" in the nationally recognized Greg Lawler's Art Fair Sourcebook — based on responses from artists across the nation who exhibited at the festival in the past two years. Artisphere ranked 37th out of 600 shows in the Fine Arts category of the Sourcebook. In Contemporary Craft, Artisphere ranked 52nd out of 600. The guide praised the festival for its strong organization, community support

and "beautiful downtown setting."

Events such as Artisphere help to draw attention to this community's fine quality of life and, in no small way, contribute to our local economy. A lively arts scene adds immeasurably to a thriving community, making it attractive to entrepreneurs and highly skilled workers.

The secret of Artisphere's success was planning and dedication. Founding Chairman Henry Horowitz enlisted the help not only of local businesses but also of a huge army of volunteers that now numbers more than 500. Almost two years went into planning the first festival, helping to make sure the make-or-break inaugural event would come off without a hitch. This year's Artisphere should be another winner.