

## West Side Leader

### Art fair brings attention to University Park

By KATHLEEN FOLKERTH

**DOWNTOWN AKRON** — A celebration of the arts — both visual and performing — will take place at the fourth annual University Park Art Fair at Grace Park Aug. 15.

The yearly event, taking place from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., will feature more than 100 regional artists selling their creations, as well as opportunities for creating art and two stages featuring musical and theatrical entertainment.

The fair is organized by the University Park Development Corp., a nonprofit organization dedicated to the renewal and rebirth of the University Park neighborhood.

The yearly event has helped bring attention to Grace Park, one of Akron's oldest green spaces, according to event Director Jill Bacon Madden.

"It's made a huge difference just by reminding people that it's there," Bacon Madden said of the fair. "It is a beautiful area in the heart of our city and a great park."

The park is located on Prospect Street between Perkins and East Market streets.

One of the newest features of this year's event is the addition of a bike valet coordinated by The University of Akron (UA) chapter of Engineers Without Borders and University Park Cycle Shop.

"The extension of the Towpath coming into downtown makes it much easier to ride a bike downtown and into the University Park area," Bacon Madden said.

The valets will help bicyclists put their bikes into racks and will watch over the bikes during the fair. The first 60 people to utilize the service will

receive a free T-shirt as well as coupons for service from the bike shop.

The service is free, but members of Engineers Without Borders will accept donations toward a project to install a water filtration system in a village in Honduras.

Those who attend can enjoy seeing the work of more than 100 artists who will participate in this year's fair. Most will be under five large tents, while a few have requested to have their own tents, Bacon Madden said.

Also, items will be for sale from clients of Hattie Larlham and the Summit County Board of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities.

In addition to viewing and buying art, fairgoers are welcome to participate in art-making themselves. Once again, UA art professor Mark Soppeland will ask the public to

create art for his entry in this year's First Night® Akron.

Bacon Madden said Soppeland's creation will feature art that can be viewed under black lights and is titled "Creatures of the Midnight Sun: An Exploration of the Beasts and Their Favorite Treats Upon Which They Like to Feast."

The Akron Art Museum also will provide two different make-and-take art projects for children.

Music and theater for all ages also will entertain, Bacon Madden said. Scheduled to perform on the Triad Communications Showmobile Stage are Lo-Watt radio, an Akron band that mixes country, folk and rock, at 10 a.m.; Ashley Brooke Toussant, a Canton folk singer, at 11:45 a.m.; Ryan Humbert, a local pop-rock favorite who is now based in Nashville, at 1:30 p.m.; and Evil Ways, a



Akron artist Molly Judge shows off work she created at the University Park Art Fair in 2007. Photo: Fred Durr

Santana tribute band, at 4 p.m.

The iMMix Studio Performance Area will feature Bill Roddy, who combines painting and juggling, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; XainGO!, which combines visual art and theater, from 11 a.m. to noon; the Miller South School for the Visual and Performing Arts Commedia dell'Arte Troupe from noon to 2 p.m.; and Michael Roy, a strolling entertainer who creates intricate origami, from 2 to 6 p.m.

Food will be available at the fair from Virtues restaurant. Items will include Angus hamburgers, sausage and peppers and chicken sandwiches, all priced at \$5 or less.

Also returning this year is music from 91.3 The Summit. Station representatives also will be on hand to collect donated musical instruments for its Music Alive program.

For more information, call (330) 374-9470 or go to [www.universityparkartfair.org](http://www.universityparkartfair.org).