

Published September 5th, 2018

Lafayette Art and Wine - a monster of a street party!

By Pippa Fisher



Photo Pippa Fisher

It's almost Art and Wine time again - Lafayette's biggest community party, a weekend-long opportunity for residents to stroll along Mt. Diablo Boulevard without traffic, wine in hand, listening to great music and browsing unique art with friends.

"What started as an experiment in 1996 when we put a couple of booths along Golden Gate Way to see if we could attract visitors to our downtown, has become a significant event and the 'go-to' festival of the year," says Executive Director of the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Jay Lifson. "Like Mary Shelley, we have created a monster," he says. "And it's alive! It is a monster of a street party."

Scott Hampton, owner of Clocks Etc., was one of the founders of that original festival. He says he had no idea the festival would become as successful as it is today. His store will be participating this year again as usual with a booth in "art alley." He says they have a large clock tower with hands that spin to land on a prize that winners can claim in his store.

The free festival, now in its 23rd year, is expecting around 80,000 visitors from around the area. With over 300 artist booths, three kid zones, four live stages and more than 20 cover bands - plus great food, wine and beer - there is no shortage of things to do.

But what do the locals think of the festival?

Tom Duffy of The Ripplers says he loves this event. "Even before we started performing at the festival, it was one of my favorite weekends of the year," he says. "The vibe, the food, the variety of great musicians and artists ... the big slide ... the time of the year - it all adds up to awesomeness!" Duffy recommends checking out Kristen Sanders' jewelry and the artwork of Molly Kars.

Residents all agree their favorite thing about the weekend is mingling with friends and family and the feeling of community.

Lafayette resident Susan Chritton agrees. "Much of our strolling time is taken with saying hello to people we haven't seen in a while," she says. Chritton and her husband have attended the festival every year since the very beginning, often joined by their adult children and their partners and friends.

Chritton's advice for a first-time festivalgoer would be to slow down. "Have fun looking at all of the merchants, have a glass of wine and enjoy listening to the music."

Lafayette resident Jill Edwards recommends seeing the Spazmatics at the Bank of the West stage.

"My family has been in Lafayette for decades, and we have been coming to the festival ever since I can remember. We attend every year and it is one of my favorite weekends," says Edwards. "When our now-teenage daughters were in elementary school we used to come down after soccer on Saturdays and go to the kids play zone. Now that they are in high school they love to catch up with friends and there are a lot of opportunities for them to volunteer. I really love the live music! There really is something for everyone."

As a family with elementary school-aged children, Debbi Feeley says they spend a lot of time in the family zone. "My kids love the bouncy castles and giant slide. Another fun (and free) activity for kids is painting the 'LPIE Guy' at the LPIE stall."

Feeley's top tips would be to avail of the free bike valet parking and cycle to the festival. "You avoid all the traffic restrictions and parking hassle and get to enjoy our beautiful trails on the way. Also, if you're attending with young family, go early before it gets too crowded and hot."

Of the continuous music and dancing, Lifson quotes Bob Weir. "The bands we get are more fun than a frog in a glass of milk!"

The festival takes place on Sept. 15 and 16. Full details can be found at <http://lafayettefestival.com/>.

Reach the reporter at: pippa@lamorindaweekly.com

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA