

~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

Young Maker's Expo to be featured at 24th Annual Art & Wine Festival



Last year's festival goers

Photo provided

By Pippa Fisher

It's the biggest party in town and, yes, it's almost time for downtown Lafayette to be transformed as neighbors stroll, sip, shop, chat and connect with community at the Lafayette Art and Wine Festival scheduled on Sept. 20 and 21.

Hosted by the Lafayette Chamber of Commerce to promote the downtown, the event raises money for local education, the Chamber, and many other local nonprofit organizations.

Some come for the shopping, many for the music, but all who come experience Lafayette at its finest. Now in its 24th year, the free festival has something for everyone. And every year there are a few new features.

One such pilot program this year will be found next to Lavash – The Young Maker's Expo, or Y-ME for short. The Chamber is giving two tables to a group of young, mostly local entrepreneurs aged from 9-16 years old to sell their stock of handcrafted items.

There is much more to this project than just the weekend of the festival. Organized and facilitated by Lafayette Troop 204 Boy Scout Jackson Steele for his Eagle Scout project, are workshops covering marketing, promotion, merchandising and business practices.

At these workshops the youngsters have discussed everything from how best to display their wares to how to best accept payment. They have discussed their goals – do they just want to make a profit? They have had to consider cost and what is actually

doable, sometimes learning to rein in ideas in order to be more practical.

"I came up with the Y-ME name because we were brainstorming name ideas and we liked the sound of 'Expo,'" says Jackson. "I then came up with 'Young Maker's Expo', because the initialization of the name was Y-ME, which I thought could be used as a marketing campaign – like 'Why Choose Me?'"

"It has been so cool for these kids to see the whole process," says Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Event Director Sara Regan, who has worked with Jackson. She describes the project as a win-win. "We're supporting the kids and giving back to the community," she explains.

Jackson says he is benefiting too from his experience. "I am really learning about the dedication, planning, and organization that goes into running an event like this," he notes, adding that he is excited that this is establishing a lasting project, living on even after his involvement.

The roughly 20 or so kids involved will be selling their crafts in two shifts on both days of the festival between 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. alongside booths offering "Make-it and Take-it" opportunities from Sewnow and The Learning Space. Town Hall Theatre will also be nearby, offering a chance for kids to experience being in a musical.

Also new this year is the Xfinity Pigskin Party, held in the Postino's courtyard – a chance to relax and watch some football on a giant screen for those less interested in shopping.

As usual, there will be great continuous music from

more than 20 bands on four stages, 300 artist/craft booths, and three kid zones including (new this year) a pirate ship. There will also be plenty of food choices including food trucks in addition to all the nearby restaurants. A wide variety of California wines and craft beers are also available.

Lafayette Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Jay Lifson says that connecting attendees to the art, music, food, wine and beer, and fun is the goal.

"But it is the vibe, the spirit and the laughter that makes it so special for me," says Lifson, adding, "I am a product of my childhood. I am a hippie at heart. It brings me great joy and satisfaction to gather the tribes and help our guests escape for a weekend."

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