



Mattoon Street Arts Festival shows new life

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Stephanie Barry, The Republican



Republican photo by Mark M. Murray

Lupita the Mariachi Mujer, plays the guitar and sings for guests at the first of the Mattoon Streets Arts Festival Saturday. The event continues Sunday.

SPRINGFIELD – Maria A. Gulluni and her family left the Mattoon Street Arts Festival with more than they anticipated.

Dream catchers for her two young daughters to banish nightmares. Natural soaps. Early Christmas presents (shhhh). And, homemade cupcakes.

"They're so decadent," Gulluni said, adding that she and her husband, Ralph Slate, had spent a good chunk of their Saturday at the festival, which has seen an unexplained resurgence in recent years.

"In the mid- to late-1990s we shrank to 45 or 50 exhibitors, then we slowly started rebuilding and hit our quantum leap that put us over 80 exhibitors. And this year we have over 95," said festival organizer and Mattoon Street area resident Robert McCarroll.

Singles, couples, families with children and hordes of people walking their dogs covered the quaint downtown neighborhood for the first day of the festival, which featured dozens of artists, crafters and food vendors.

"It's like its own little world here," jewelry-maker Charlene Kocot, a new vendor of Springfield, said of the event. "It's been great. There's been tons of people. Huge crowd. It's been a very successful day."

Resident Judith A. Matt said she spent much of the day making meatball subs for vendors.

"It's just a very welcoming atmosphere," Matt said. "We try to make it that way."

Jane and John Chenille, of Granby, perched on folding chairs outside their tent, which featured hand-made doll clothes and aprons, among other wares.

"I got an American Girl Doll for my 50th birthday. I started making clothes and I never stopped," she said, adding that she recruited her retired stockbroker husband to take over the apron-making responsibilities when she became too consumed with doll clothes.

John Chenille said he appreciated the homespun flavor of the festival.

"There's nothing that will kill a craft fair faster than being next to the guy selling sawdust-filled alligators from Taiwan," he said.

The arts festival will continue today. Mattoon Street is off Chestnut and Elliot streets downtown.

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