

# The News-Herald

## DiVine District draws 1,000 people for artwalk

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A recent artwalk in Willoughby proved to be a success for a business coalition aiming to spruce up its section of Vine Street.

The "DiVine District," which consists of several businesses — including My Song Boutique, Spray U Tan, Schultz Upholstery, Genis Woodworking and Design and Body 4 U Personal Training — recently kicked off its initiative by hosting a "DiVine ArtWalk" Sept. 3.

With the help of the city, the district permanently installed more than 20 modern art sculptures, many from recycled local material, on Vine Street between Erie and Skiff streets.

"I estimate we had a steady flow throughout the event and around 1,000 people walked the sculpture garden," said Jackie Bertolette, co-owner of My Song Boutique and project co-initiator. "We feel that the event itself was an amazing success and that the excitement about the sculptures was tremendous."

As part of the day's festivities, children helped to create the last sculpture, Bertolette said.

"Nearly 45 kids put their talents into 'Young @ Art,' the children sculpture and the community mural was great fun," she said. "Mayor (David) Anderson led a ribbon cutting for the sculpture walk and he and his wife did the first two squares on the community mural. They walked the entire stroll and were very pleased with the art and the event."

The sculptures all have "donated by" plaques on them and some were dedicated to certain city departments.

"We also have several entities, such as the Willoughby Fine Arts Association, who have expressed interest in being represented on the walk," Bertolette said. "It has been a very positive experience for Willoughby, the arts and the DiVine District."

Prior to the artwalk, many of the businesses on the street were proactive by rejuvenating their frontage with flowers, banners and renovations, according to the district.

"We have had much interest in hosting an artist even on a regular basis," Bertolette said. "And (we) have scheduled what we are calling 'ArtStock' for Oct. 15 from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. This will be a free event for both artists and event goers, in which the artists will do their crafts in a creative assembly and allow folks to enjoy, ask questions and participate."

Beyond that, the district plans to hold an artwalk event each year and hold a contest for the addition of several new sculptures to be included in the permanent installation, Bertolette said.

"We are also looking at other ideas for fun new projects to beautify the area in spring 2011, but have not yet confirmed which ideas we will do," she added.