

BUY  
PHOTO  
REPRINTS  
ONLINE



# The right mortgage.

PeoplesBank

Member FDIC/Member DIF Equal Housing Lender

SUBSCRIBE TO  
THE GAZETTE  
ONLINE  
OR IN PRINT

GAZETTENET.com

Amherst Bulletin

The Recorder

Valley Advocate

Pioneer Valley

Many Hands

Hampshire Life

Sign out

Account

Trouble finding something?

Contact us

Classifieds

Daily Hampshire Gazette - Established 1786

news search

Local News State/Region U.S./World Obituaries Sports Business Schools Colleges Politics Opinion Entertainment Health Living

## Artists come bearing gifts: Easthampton Bear Fest brings out crowds and smiles

By CATHERINE BAUM  
Staff Writer

Email this page

Printer-friendly version



Monday, June 15, 2009

EASTHAMPTON - The weather was warm, the smiles were wide, and the bear jokes plentiful for Bear Fest in Easthampton Saturday.

"I come here to bear good wishes and good luck," state Rep. John Scibak said in his welcome speech. "This is an event that sets Easthampton apart. It's a beautiful day - we do not have unbearably hot weather."

About seven volunteers set up the 35 bear sculptures, which celebrate arts in the city, from 4 to 10 a.m. on the day of the event.

"As soon as the sun came up there were people coming out to view the bears," said Briana Taylor, Bear Fest coordinator.

Bear Fest attendees grabbed their maps and followed the bear tracks from one sculpture to the next. Cameras flashed as children climbed on, hugged and posed next to their new bear friends.

Easthampton photographer David Ryan said he liked snapping shots of not only the bears, but people enjoying them.

Crowds huddled around "Wire Haired Bear," "Hiding Bear," and "Bear, Bath & Beyond" on Cottage Street; "Ted. E Bear," "Mountain Park Bear" and "Transoceanic Bear" on Union Street; "The Gingerbear Man," "Aurora 'Bear'ealis" and "Papa Bear and Baby Bear" on Main Street; and "Astronaut Bear" and "Bear Hugs" on Pleasant Street, among others.

Artwork covered them all from ear to paw.

1 2



GORDON DANIELS

Tyler Mullaly, 6, of Easthampton, shares a moment with the "Berry Bear" next to the Enrichment Center on Union Street, designed by Elsie Hasskarl, Diedrick Snoek and Marjorie Tauer. He was there with his mother and father, Jason and Megan Mullaly.



PIONEER VALLEY STORE **Click Here Shop Now!**  
Where EVERYTHING is 30% Off EVERYDAY!



### Popular stories

- Bicyclist injured on Main Street in Northampton today
- Poll watchers part of electoral process
- Williamsburg pub's closing has its fans worried
- Laurie Tremblay, 42, beloved mother
- Driver blamed for causing I-91 crash in Easthampton

"The intricacy of some of these bears is incredible," said Mayor Michael A. Tautznik. "They will put us on the map."

Luke Cavagnac, a painter based in the Eastworks building, spent about 20 minutes each day for a couple of months creating "This Bear is Worth a Thousand Words." The project was different from most of his paintings because it was three-dimensional, he said. "This Bear is Worth a Thousand Words" is comprised of dozens of tiny patches with individual paintings in each patch. The patches are "kind of like a quilt," Cavagnac said, and are symbolic of his studio walls.

Cavagnac said Bear Fest is a great opportunity to bring artists together to share ideas and display talents.

"You can't die of exposure in this business," he said smiling.

Meanwhile, Gabby Neal, 7, and Mt. Tom's Homemade Ice Cream owner Jim Ingram scooped free samples of "Bear Tracks," a flavor Neal created for Bear Fest. The Cottage Street tent smelled of the new ice cream's ingredients - vanilla, honey, marshmallows and Teddy Grahams.

A tourist attraction

Easthampton resident Michael Garjian said he could spot out-of-towners because they took photos of not only bears, but the mountains, dam and Nashawannuck Pond.

"You know there's a lot of new people in town," said Garjian, who was admiring one of 600 elementary-student bear drawings pinned to the fences in a Cottage Street parking lot. "They see all these people, and they see why this is a wonderful place. There's a lot of good, high energy here."

Barbara Sullivan, of Whately, said she had driven through Easthampton before, but Saturday was the first time she walked downtown.

"It's a pretty little town," Sullivan said, enjoying a Mt. Tom's ice cream sample. "It's very friendly and very nice. I feel safe here."

Easthampton resident Wendy Hammerle stopped to check out the bears on her bicycle. A member of the Manhan Rail Trail Committee, Hammerle said she hopes the event stirs interest in city attractions like the trail.

Thirty-five volunteers and 50 businesses made Bear Fest possible, raising \$53,000 for the event. The bears cost about \$25,000 and artists were given a stipend of \$500 each for supplies. Easthampton City Arts and four committees planned events, marketing and school participation, among other tasks.

"It's been really overwhelming," said Taylor, who was on the Easthampton City Arts board when the idea was brought up two years ago. "We were pretty tenacious and we stuck to it."

Displayed outdoors until October are 20 4½-foot bears and 15 2½-foot bears, while 32 14-inch bears created by students are housed inside local businesses. In October, all of the bears will be auctioned at the Log Cabin. Proceeds from the auctions will be dispersed among Easthampton Public Schools, the art program at Riverside Industries, Easthampton City Arts and Bear Fest artists. Bear-related events will be held throughout the next four months.

"You've got all summer to look at these," Tautznik said.

Bear Fest's opening went off without a hitch, save for two acts of crime. One bear was stolen, while another bear was vandalized early Sunday morning, police said. There are no suspects and a final report is set to be written today, according to police.

John Polak, a member of the Bear Fest steering committee, said "Bearly There," created by Michael MacTavish, is missing from its log on the Eastworks lawn on Pleasant Street.

The other bear, "Rubber Ducky, You're the One" by Melissa Stratton, was taken from its Pleasant Green Park site and found nearby Sunday. It was "shaken up," Polak said. The bear was moved to Mt. Tom Homemade Ice Cream on Cottage Street, according to Polak.

Catherine Baum can be reached at [cbaum@gazettenet.com](mailto:cbaum@gazettenet.com).

Filed Under: [arts](#) [bear fest](#) [easthampton](#) [local](#) [news](#) [video](#)

## Comments

Post new comment

Your name:

[Catherine Baum](#)

Subject:

Comment: \*

### Input format

#### Filtered HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
- Allowed HTML tags: `<a>` `<b>` `<i>` `<strong>` `<em>` `<code>` `<cite>` `<ul>` `<ol>` `<li>` `<img>` `<div>`
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

#### Full HTML

- Web page addresses and e-mail addresses turn into links automatically.
- Lines and paragraphs break automatically.

[More information about formatting options](#)



[Local News](#) [State/Region](#) [U.S./World](#) [Obituaries](#) [Sports](#) [Business](#) [Schools](#) [Colleges](#) [Politics](#) [Opinion](#) [Entertainment](#) [Health](#) [Living](#) [Sci/Tech](#)  
[Blogs](#)

[Copyright Notice](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Help Center](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Subscribe to the Gazette](#) | [Advertising](#)

Daily Hampshire Gazette © 2008 All rights reserved