

Sculpture Tour Eau Claire

by Sherry Mohr

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Beginning in June, downtown Eau Claire will come alive with 26 original sculptures from Wisconsin, national and international artists. Some of the sculptures will be bronze, others marble and still others steel, and according to **Sherry Mohr**, they will all be **Amazing**. The pieces will be displayed on granite pedestals with name plates identifying the name of the sculpture, the artist, and if one exists, a site sponsor. The sculptures can be viewed 24 hours a day, 7 days per week at no cost.

Sherry, who is also a member of our Rotary Club, is one of a small, but passionate group of volunteers that is bringing the concept of a Sculpture Tour to Eau Claire. This type of community beautification project is a proven way to positively impact the community, its residents, and the visitors who will come to view this unique cultural project.

Sherry and others became aware of this concept, whereby cities across the country that were reinventing themselves were including a Sculpture Tour as a part of the process. To get things started Sherry got in contact with volunteers from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, who had recently kicked off their own Sculpture Tour, to learn from their experiences.

After some initial planning, the project gained some traction last October when the City Council approved the project, and the volunteer group formalized its existence under the auspices of the Eau Claire Community Foundation. Two funds were established... one where donations are used to support the operations of the organization, and a second Endowment Fund which will maintain Sculpture Tour Eau Claire's initiative long into the future. Sculpture Tour Eau Claire is totally privately funded by businesses, individuals and other partners.

With a structure in place, Sculpture Tour Eau Claire placed a call to artists, professional and amateur of all backgrounds, to submit their own original pieces for consideration. Over 200 artists submitted their pieces and the committee selected the 26 pieces that will be displayed in Eau Claire for the 50 week period.

This Sculpture Tour is much more than just a public art project. Based on the experiences of other communities, we can expect a number of spin-off activities including fitness walks, school tours, humanities discussions, photo contests, nursing home/assisted living outings, and collaboration with UW-Eau Claire students, local artists and businesses.

In the first three months, the public will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite sculpture, which in turn will be purchased by Sculpture Tour Eau Claire and donated to the City of Eau Claire for permanent placement.

In addition to the community benefiting from this project, the artists benefit too. They are able to have their work loaned out and on display for a year, are provided with a travel stipend in and out of Eau Claire to set up their work, and all sculptures are available for purchase, often times at a reduced price. And sometimes local companies or individuals purchase a piece for display or to be donated to the City.

The June 4 start date is just around the corner, so keep your eyes on the Barstow and Whipple Street areas as the 2011-12 Sculpture Tour kicks off.

For more information on Sculpture Tour Eau Claire, including how to get involved or support this project, go to www.sculpturetour.com



Sherry Mohr, a "Sculpture Tour Eau Claire" volunteer and fellow Rotarian.