

BY NANCY SUNDSTROM

Special to the Record-Eagle

Gotta have art? From fairs and festivals to fine art galleries and museums, northern Michigan has a rich array of venues and events at which art of every sort can be found. The ArtCenter in Traverse City even offers a map that lists 20 events and 50 stops on an Art Craft Trail that stretches from Cadillac and Frankfort through Leelanau County and Traverse City,

and then north to Torch Lake and East Jordan to Charlevoix and Petoskey.

And that's just for starters.

"This is an area that's a wonderful magnet for artists and art lovers," said Marcia Bellinger, owner of Belstone Gallery in Traverse City, a contemporary gallery featuring the work of nearly 100 fine artists and crafters. "There are nationally acclaimed artists whose work is nurtured by living and working

here, and both residents of and visitors to the region seem to have a fairly sophisticated appreciation for art, overall. When you add in the factors of quality museums and galleries, and venues like art fairs, you have a lot of enjoyable and fun ways to access art."

While the plentiful range of museums and galleries offers changing exhibits all through the year, the majority of festivals and fairs celebrating art can be found in the warmer months of spring and summer. One of the first is the Elk Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce Arts & Crafts Fair on Saturday, May 24. One of the last of the summer is also in Elk Rapids; the Elk Rapids Arts & Crafts Show is on Saturday, Aug. 23.

In between, most every weekend brings an art event. Traverse City is home to four one-day shows: the Olde Towne Arts & Crafts Fair on Sunday, June 29; the

National Cherry Festival Arts & Crafts Fair one week later on Sunday, July 6; the 43rd Annual Traverse Bay Outdoor Art Fair on Saturday, July 26; and the 27th Annual Downtown Art Fair on Saturday, Aug. 16. Charlevoix hosts two events: the 35th Annual Charlevoix Craft Show on July 12-13 and the 45th Annual Charlevoix Waterfront Art

Fair on Aug. 9.

Rob Bacigalupi, deputy director of Traverse City's Downtown Development Authority, said that downtowns all over the country view art events as important to the attraction and entertainment mix that most seek as a balance to shopping, dining, and services.

"Whether it's art in public places or organizing art fairs, downtowns value the presence of art and often play a role in providing work and venues for artists," explained Bacigalupi. "Here in Traverse City, we hold three different events that draw thousands of people and showcase the work of hundreds of artists ... Artists and the public all benefit from these opportunities."

Another way artists and the public interact is through classes and workshops, such as those provided by local colleges or entities such as ArtCenter Traverse City or the Glen Arbor Arts Association. Educational offerings are available during every season and give young to old and professional to novice a chance to study the art form of their choice with professionals.

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