

Studio Tour busy despite COVID-19

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By Mike Riley

The Haliburton Highlands Studio Tour celebrated its 33rd year of operation Oct. 3 and 4. Due to COVID-19 and its restrictions, only 12 artists decided to participate this year, down from 40 artists that were originally slated to be on the tour. While the studio tour in Bancroft was cancelled this year due to the pandemic, this tour went ahead with restrictions in place. The artisans involved celebrated a busy first day despite the limits imposed by COVID-19. Paradigm Designs Jewellery and A Stitch at a Time Quilts and Scarves in Dysart et al. and Artech Studios Glassblowing in Highlands East all said that Saturday, Oct. 3 had been extremely busy for them, comparable to a brisk business day they had experienced during previous years' studio tours, before COVID-19.

Peter Emmink and Joyce Pruyers-Emmink are the co-directors of this year's studio tour steering committee. They are also artists on the tour, but elected not to show this year due to COVID-19.

"It's definitely a different tour this year for obvious reasons, with 12 studios having made the decision to open their doors with COVID-19 safety protocols in place," says Peter Emmink.

These protocols included requiring masks, having sanitizer at the door, ensuring distancing was observed, having limits on the number of people inside their studios and having outdoor tented areas showcasing the art wherever possible.

At the Artech Studios glass blowing studio in Highlands East, Jenn Wanless-Craig and Terry Craig are busy showing their customers how they make their unique glass wares in their opened-up studio space. The 2000-degree Fahrenheit oven and the glass blowing torches are getting a good workout as they finesse the glassware into the desired shapes.

Wanless-Craig says that Oct. 3 was ridiculously busy, and of course, is expecting next weekend to be even more so with Thanksgiving. In addition to her art, Wanless-Craig also sits on the studio tour steering committee.

Craig mentions that the studio tour is great because it gives them a chance to show people what they can do.

"We can show them how the glassworks are made. It's nice to share what we do with people," he says. While the tour is important financially to their bottom line, they also have over a dozen other retail shows they usually do if not for the pandemic.

The couple mention that they are making custom glasses for the LCBO that will be available through their Food and Drink magazine.

"It's a really exciting thing for us as a lot of our shows are cancelled," Jenn says. The Haliburton Highlands Studio Tour was open this past weekend both days from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., and will be on next weekend on Saturday and Sunday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can go to www.thestudiotour.ca for more information about the various artists and their wares.