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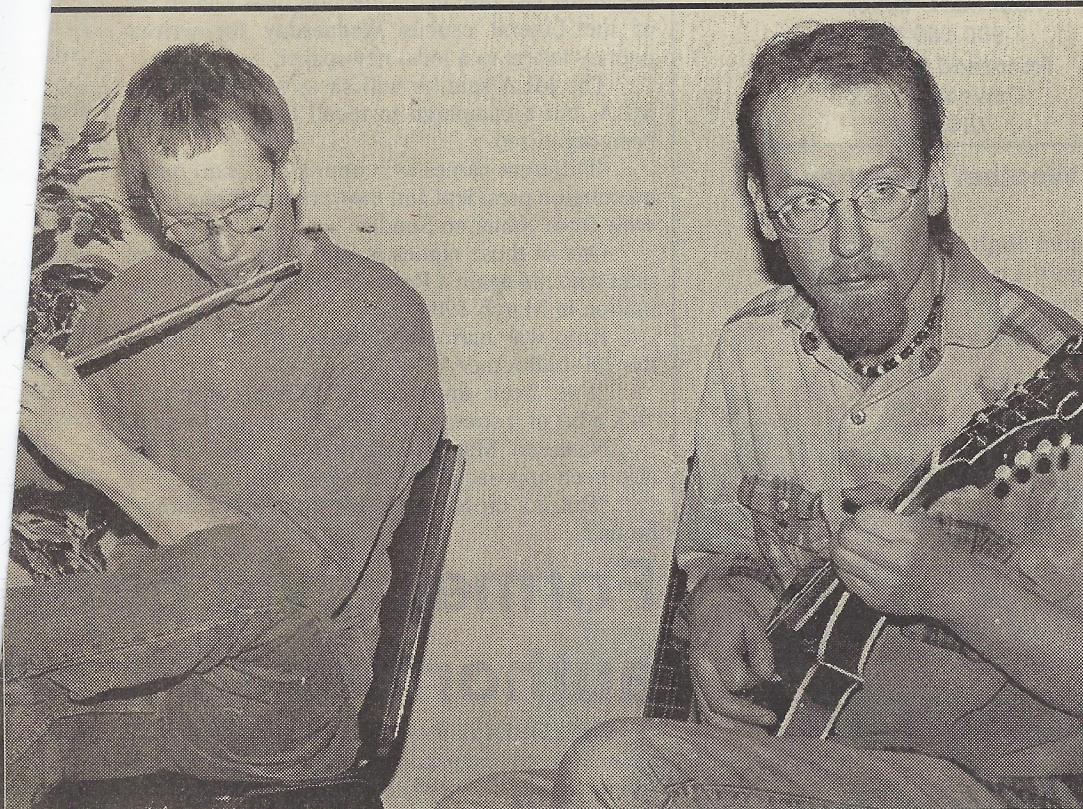
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DAWSON CREEK, B.C.

Monday, April



Rio and Reno Fitch provided the musical note at the art auction. The brothers played on flutes and mandolins before, and during the intermission, of the auction, Friday night at the George Dawson Inn. (Photo by Cees Mond)

Annual art auction raises almost \$20,000

BY CEES MOND

Daily News Staff

An Emily Mattson sculpture depicting Dawson Creek's Louisa Ewert taking a break at her Lou's Coffee and Clothes fetched the top price at the annual art auction Friday.

The high price meant the sculpture, Hanging Out, was out of reach for Ewert who had wanted to bid on it herself, but never got a chance to make a bid as the price went beyond \$600 in just seconds.

Buyer Alyce Haverland told sculptor Mattson she had been admiring her work for some time and was delighted with the purchase.

The top price was good news for the South Peace Art Society for which the auction is the primary fundraiser.

The lowest price paid for an art piece was \$45, and several other paintings sold for less than the framing costs as well, meaning there were numerous bargains to be had for the bidding public.

"You never know what's going to happen, that's part of the intrigue of the art auction," said South Peace Art Society president Carrie Schafer.

Auctioneer Ken Haverland ended up talking nearly \$20,000 out of people's pockets, a better

result than last year and the year before, said art gallery curator Ellen Corea.

After expenses, the auction raised a net profit of about \$15,000 from the donated artworks by dozens of local artists.

The auction went off on a good start, selling an Edna McPhail watercolor for \$475, then selling two small Susanne Dixon paintings for only \$50 and \$80 respectively. Another Dixon painting, Moonlight Fun, later fetched the second-highest price at the auction, \$750.

The art auction, in its 16th year, was held this year in a partnership with the Dawson Creek Horticultural Society for that society's 60th anniversary.

The George Dawson Inn was dressed up as an indoor garden by volunteers of the societies and the auction was aptly called Blooming Art.

Schafer said she really liked the idea of the partnership between the horticultural society and the arts society.

"There's a lot of enthusiasm and the two groups are supporting each other," she said. "It's going to be an exciting year, and (the auction) is a wonderful thing to kick off spring."

The horticultural society will be starting a perennial garden in NAR Park this spring, just below the steps of the art gallery.

Local youth ambassadors help tourists

BY CEES MOND

Daily News Staff

For tourism coordinator Marilyn Crutch, a youth ambassador is the difference between passing by uninterested or offering to take a couple's picture at the Mile Zero Post.

For the kids involved, it may mean an advantage in getting their first job.

The Dawson Creek Youth Ambassadors Club is about to be launched at Parkhill Elementary School, and Crutch, who has modeled the eight-hour educational program for children on the provincial Superhost program, is quite excited about it.

"It means younger kids are already being trained in customer service and vice delivery professionalism," she said.

Superhost, a provincial program which started in Vancouver in 1986, is an eight-hour program for children on the tourism industry and elsewhere better developed in the industry.

The program teaches people essential listening and communication skills, as well as communication and customer service skills, and is important to deal with the public and the customer.

It is offered to people grade 10 and over.

Crutch doesn't have the illusion that education is going to make all children into well-behaved, polite individuals, but with a bit of direction and training and speaking skills, children may very well become a valuable tourism asset Dawson Creek has to offer.

For the visiting couple that has its picture taken by a passing child — a stranger to them — the encounter is one of the highlights of their holidays and a fun memory for Dawson Creek.

Parkhill principal John Harkness believes the program may have a positive effect on the kids' listening and basic communication skills.

"We know those things are very important for the future," he said, stressing that you can't learn those things in school.

The children who go through the course of the Dawson Creek Youth Ambassadors Club certainly will.

"What we hope to be able to do is make it a personal planning curriculum," Harkness said.

He said better communication skills have a positive effect on children's self esteem that will help them in life.

"When they go out looking for their first job, they'll certainly have a leg up on other kids."

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