

Sculpture walk, arts fair planned for 2011

By Dan Linehan

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MANKATO — Two new art shows — one a walking tour of downtown sculptures and the other an art fair — are coming to Mankato next May and June.

CityArts hopes to put 15 to 20 sculptures in downtown Mankato along Hickory and Second streets as well as along Belgrade Avenue in North Mankato by May 21, said Tami Paulsen, leading the effort for the City Center Partnership, a city-funded business group.

The Andreas Foundation pledged \$50,000 to the effort, \$10,000 a year for five years, Paulsen said.

CityArts is in part modeled after the Sioux Falls SculptureWalk, which has a “People’s Choice” award determined by public voting. As in Sioux Falls, the most popular sculpture will be purchased from the artists. The City Center

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Partnership has set aside \$10,000 for that purpose.

The sculpture event is also presented in part by the Twin Rivers Center for the Arts, which is the lead agency behind the art fair, called Arts By The River.

Scheduled for June 11-12 of 2011 at Riverfront Park, the art fair’s entrants must be approved by a panel before they may be displayed.

“Artists prefer juried art fairs because it keeps the quality high,” said Shannon Robinson, executive director of the arts center.

A website, www.artsbytheriver.com, is slated to be up by Oct. 1, she said.

The Children’s Museum of Southern Minnesota has agreed to provide activities for kids.

Verizon Wireless Center staff are looking to book a national act on the night of June 11 to keep the visitors in Mankato.

Both events are to some extent funded by the city of Mankato. The city gave \$25,000 each to the arts center and the business association in 2010.

The city ties its funding of these groups to measurable outcomes like an increase in economic activity, assistant City Manager Tanya Ange said. The arts center also received \$8,000 in this fiscal year from the 19.75 percent of the three-eighths percent sales tax that goes toward the arts. Robinson said she learned Thursday the arts subset of the tax, called the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, also had approved \$7,000 for the sculpture event. Depending on other grants that can be found for the sculptures, organizers may ask the city of Mankato for \$8,500 and North Mankato for \$2,500. Those appropriations have not been approved by either city council.

The art fair and sculpture walk have been in the works since Envision 2020, a community planning process that wrapped up in 2006.

It’s more or less a coincidence that they are coming to fruition a few weeks apart.

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