

The art of running a business

By ANGELICA BLENICH

At first glance it may appear as though an art lesson is underway at Bracebridge's Chapel Gallery, but this is no ordinary class. The group of artists in question had gathered for a pilot workshop being put on by the town of Bracebridge in partnership with the Muskoka Small Business Centre and Muskoka Arts and Crafts. The workshop is a part of Art in the Heart, an event dedicated to discovering emerging artists in downtown Bracebridge.

In April of this year, the District of Muskoka declared Muskoka to be a designated arts community. Art in the Heart is a result of the Town of Bracebridge supporting this declaration.

"When we started talking about the project we wanted to narrow our focus down to new and emerging artists so that we would be different and unique," explains Cheryl Kelley, director of economic development for the town of Bracebridge.

Art in the Heart is a new initiative that will showcase the artists and their work on the streets, alleys and public spaces of downtown. The event is scheduled to take place on the weekends of August 16-17 and 23-24.

To be considered for the initiative, artists had to submit an application along with photos of their work. Entries were then juried by a group of professional artists. This year the program



EMERGING ARTIST. Local artist Colleen Mitchell strikes a pose in her studio. Mitchell is just one of the 15 artists participating in Art in the Heart, a new initiative being put on by the town of Bracebridge. The event will feature different new and emerging artists showing their work in public spaces throughout the downtown. It will run for the weekends of August 16-17 and 23-24.

Photo by Angelica Blenich

accepted a total of 15 artists.

Elene Freer is the curator and coordinator for Muskoka Arts and Crafts. She says there was no shortage of talent for the jury to look at.

"The jury was extremely pleased with the calibre of artwork submitted," she says. "It's not surprising to us that Muskoka has a multitude of exciting new artists just waiting for an opportunity like Art in the

Heart."

Along with being invited to exhibit their work, artists were also able to partake in a pilot workshop. The goal of the workshop is simple: to help these new and emerging artists establish themselves by making them more business savvy.

Deena Brock is a managing business consultant with the Muskoka Small Business Centre. Brock was on hand at

the workshop to provide helpful business tips and tackle challenges artists may be faced with. Topics she covered included everything from dealing with different forms of payment to how to handle a washroom break.

Brock believes information like this is invaluable to the artists, no matter how mundane or simple it may seem.

"Because they are new and

emerging artists some of them are on the shy side," she explains. "They are more than likely going to have questions and be unsure about this subject but not know how to go about getting the information."

Kelley believes the lessons from the workshop are just one of the great perks of this initiative.

A great way to get exposure

"We hear it all the time," says Kelley, "about how many people in this region have an artistic ability or skill and there are lots of ways for them to promote their work once they're established but there wasn't a lot of ways for them to get there."

Other topics brought up at the workshop included how to set-up an exhibit to be both visually stimulating and practical.

Art in the Heart is the first show local artist Carole Ann Thur has ever been a part of. She thinks it's a great place to start.

"It's a way to get exposure," she says, "and also a good way to get business."

The town is planning on running this initiative again next summer. They are also hoping for an increased interest from local artists.

"We're hoping to have twice as many here next year!" exclaims Jill Harris, an economic development assistant with the town of Bracebridge.

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