

August 13, University Park Arts Fair & Food Fest at Grace Park, Akron. Contact: University Park Alliance, Andrew Jackson House, 277 East Mill Street, Akron, OH 44308. Phone: 330-777-2070. Fax: 330-535-1417. Email: info@universityparkartsfair.org. Website: www.universityparkartsfair.org. Space fee: \$75. Exhibitors: 100. Hours: 10-6. Admission: \$0.

By Kristina Malcolm

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Medium: Silversmithing

The University Park Arts Fair & Food Fest at Grace Park has earned its place among fine art shows in Akron, Ohio. Now in its sixth year, the festival has matured into a well-organized, established event that commanded decent attendance, despite the weather predictions for thunderstorms, with estimates totaling over 5,000 visitors this year.

The University Park Alliance, a community development corporation, was the new organizer for the 2011 show. This year, the staff members broadened the community-minded vision of the show to encompass local food vendors. Beth Houseman, Senior Director of Communications and Community Relations of the alliance said: "The University Park Arts Fair & Food Fest at Grace Park offers artists and visitors an opportunity to experience the cool shade and beauty of Akron's oldest park and experience the urban vibrancy of the University Park neighborhood while enjoying music and other family-friendly entertainment, fine art and fine crafts from more than 100 local and regional artists, innovative food by Akron locals and engaging exhibitors from the University Park community."

This University Park Alliance continued this community awareness by featuring local music and a fantastic childrens activity area along with a "community tent," where local organizations demonstrated their services such as neighborhood events and wellness activities. Surprisingly, the Alliance did not change its unconventional application process. The artists are juried solely by a submission of an artist statement and a signed application. "Exhibitors are hand-selected from applicants for quality, diversity and interest by show staff," said Houseman.

Artists representing work in printmaking, clay, jewelry, glass, photography, fiber, mixed media, drawing, painting and wood are "provided exhibit space located inside large, clear-span tents, as well as one 8-foot table and two chairs as needed," said Houseman. Setup begins early the day of the show, with drive-up accessibility to your booth space.

Speaking with other vendors throughout the day, I was able to determine that most were happy about their sales. A general "doing better than we expected" attitude was the theme of the afternoon. As for myself, this years sales were the highest of my five year history at the show. I was very satisfied with my totals and will be continuing to participate in the show.