Imagine Main Street aids fire victims

BY BRENDA SULLIVAN
ReminderNews

When an Oct. 13 fire destroyed a historic building on Manchester's Main Street, it was a devastating blow to the businesses owners — including the Great Harvest Bread bakery — and the eight residents who lived above the shops. Several efforts have been underway to help the victims of the fire, including a Nov. 7 special event organized by Imagine Main Street, and a concert and wine tasting sponsored by MACC, the Manchester Area Council of Churches and MCC on Main.

Imagine Main Street’s mission is to revitalize the downtown historic district with a focus on the arts — working to create a hub of activity that includes performances, galleries, pop-up stores, public art and much more — working in collaboration with business owners, nonprofits, local artists, the Manchester Downtown Special Services District and others.

The main feature of this most recent Imagine Main Street event was a scavenger hunt in which participants, who made a donation in exchange for tickets, had to find the answers to questions or collect an item.

Scavenger hunt questions and tasks included:
- What type of shop was first in this building — Pinewood Furniture at 1115 Main St. — and when did they first open?
- How many days was Coventry Farms at 738 Main St. closed due to the fire?
- What is the name of the cat in the red painting on the wall, at E.M. Douglas Art and Framing?
- Get a guitar pick from Beller’s Music.
- Pick up a ‘How to download e-books from the library’ flyer at the Mary Cheney Library.

The first entry returned with the most correct answers could receive either a gift certificate to Mulberry Street Restaurant, donated by the owners, or a pass to the Connecticut Science Center, donated by First Niagara Bank. Clues to the answers were placed at shops along Main Street, thus introducing visitors to the variety of downtown businesses, some of which also held special events.

For example, the Forest Package Store hosted a tasting of Jack Daniels Winter Jack, a Tennessee cider, and Sean’s Fine Jewelry offered a wine tasting. Rockville Bank also sponsored a charity event for MACC, “Face the Need,” held at MCC on Main, that included an exhibit of artworks by East Catholic High and Manchester High, that included a live auction of the art and performances by the schools’ bands.

Another highlight of the evening was a pop-up with artisan crafters and art demonstrations where visitors could buy locally-crafted items as well as artworks created by Young@Art, a new grassroots group working on creating a program that will provide space, materials and mentors for young artists who will learn how to market their work and other business skills.

This storefront shop-for-one-night also included Marie Binette whose scented soaps, Sapone Naturale, filled the space with aromas including biscotti and coffee. A selection of her soaps can be found at http://www.saponenaturale.etsy.com.

And staying up past his bedtime for this event was a tiny visitor named Gizmo, there to let people know about a therapy dog program called Paws for Friendship. To benefit this program, candle crafter Laura Scheuy created a candle she calls ‘Gizmo Fresh.’ She also created a special candle to benefit the Main Street fire victims with a scent like fresh-baked bread, in homage to the Great Harvest Bread bakery. Those who missed the event can still buy either of these candles at http://www.candlesbylaura.com.

For more information about Gizmo, visit http://www.pawsforfriendshipinc.org. Also, for every ‘like’ Gizmo gets on his Facebook page, 10 cents will be donated to the National Canine Cancer Foundation. To learn more about this, visit gizzywonderdoglet on Facebook.

The next Imagine Main Street Happening is coming up on Dec. 5. To learn more about it, visit the website at http://www.imaginemainstreet.com or ‘like’ them on Facebook.