

Bra contest inspires creativity, humor (Union–News, Springfield, MA)

By PAT CAHILL Staff Writer

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PHOTO A glittering "Mardi Bras" with a tiny saxophone dangling from each cup. A blue "Ori–bra–mi" bra made out of Japanese folding paper. A French "Bra–sserie" studded with a miniature wine bottle, bowl of fruit and hearty breakfast.

These are just some of the colorful entries received so far in the "Show Us Your Bra!" contest sponsored by Gazebo lingerie shop in Northampton.

The contest invites people of all ages and levels of artistic talent to create whimsical art in the shape of a life–size brassiere. Entries are being accepted through Sept. 28 at 11 a.m.

The offbeat event, which is held annually, has been so successful that out–of–state entries are starting to come in and talk show host Rosie O'Donnell has expressed interest in it.

In artsy Northampton, it has produced an outpouring of witty and imaginative creations from its beginnings, but this year is going to be bigger than ever, according to Judith I. Fine, owner of Gazebo.

For the first time, there will be a Benefit Gala which will include the auctioning off of the bras. Featuring fine food from Portabello Catering and live jazz by the Charles Miller Trio, the gala will be held Oct. 6 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the A.P.E. Gallery at Thornes Market in Northampton. Admission to the event is \$20.

All proceeds from the auction and gala go to The Breast Form Fund and the Cancer Connection, which manages the fund. Both programs are non–profit. The Breast Form Fund was established at Gazebo in 1994 to provide under–insured women with post–mastectomy prostheses designed to resemble their natural shapes.

The gala is made possible with funding from Baystate Medical Center, Canyon Ranch, the Women's Times and many private donors.

After the gala, the bras will remain on exhibit at the gallery at Thornes until Oct. 21 for public viewing.

In November, Gazebo will issue a CD case-sized 2002 calendar featuring photographs of the most memorable bras from the 2001 contest.

Those who are interested in entering the contest should keep in mind that the bra must be three-dimensional and, although it doesn't have to be wearable, it should be human-sized.

Just about any material can be used, with two exceptions: nothing perishable and nothing living. (One year an artist tried to enter an "aquarium" bra that featured a live goldfish in each cup, says Fine. It was rejected.)

So far this year, media has included clay, metal, plastic, duct tape, beads, buttons and silk flowers.

For more information on entering the contest, call Gazebo at 584-6673. Website is www.the-gazebo.com.

Bra creations will be judged at noon on Sept. 28. The names of contestants will not be revealed until after the judging. First-, second- and third-place winners will be awarded \$200-, \$100- and \$50 gift certificates to Gazebo.

Another good reason to enter the contest: Anyone who creates and submits a bra gets a choice of free admission to the gala or a "Show Us Your Bra!" calendar.

Amateurs should not be intimidated, but the entries so far are enchanting.

One is a towering copper sculpture called "Tall and Small," consisting of two "bras" of different sizes. Each has luxuriant flower petals forming the cups. Sinuous copper "threads" support the structures. The taller one also has long flat leaves that suggest a kind of corset.

A "Fresh Brasta" bra, inspired by Northampton's Fresh Pasta Restaurant, features two little colanders with spaghetti dripping from them, straps made of forks, and a miniature tomato linking the "cups."

"The Big Catch" is made of two green aquarium fishnets held together by aquarium tubing.

The "Brasserie" bra is accompanied by a little menu framed in the same plaid that adorns the bra. It is full of such puns as: "Thank you for your support."

Those interested in a sneak preview of some of these creations can consider a benefit called "Ladies' Night Out: Thriving and Surviving with Ann Jillian," Oct. 1 from 4 to 9:30 p.m. at Cooley–Dickinson Hospital. Tickets are \$35, and proceeds go to the Cancer Care Program there.

The program includes registration (4–6 p.m.), dinner and a talk by actress Ann Jillian, followed by an art show and reception that will include some of the "Show Us Your Bra!" entries.

For more information on the Cooley–Dickinson event, call 582–2028. Website is www.cooley-dickinson.org.

BENEFIT GALA

Event: "Show Us Your Bra!" Benefit Gala

When: Oct. 6, 7 p.m.

Where: A.P.E. Gallery, Thornes Market, Northampton

Tickets: \$20

Information: 584–6673

Followed by: Free exhibition at Thornes through Oct. 21

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