

Magicvalley.com

## Artists flock to Ritter Island for art festival's 16th year

**Blair Koch**

**Times-News correspondent | Posted: Sunday, September 28, 2008 11:00 pm**

The big yellow school bus made its descending trip to Ritter Island, leaving the cares and worries of the daily grind behind in the parking lot.

Filled close to capacity, its passengers quickly exited at the bottom, excited to have finally arrived at the 16th annual Thousand Springs Festival of the Arts.

"You have to work to get down here, and people seem to enjoy the festival more because you leave your car up top, take the bus down and you're in a totally different world," said Sheryl West of Jerome.

West has participated in the festival since its inception, selling hand-made ceramics. With the weather cooperating perfectly, West said on Sunday that attendance was steady and strong.

"It's been pretty good," she said. "We've sold quite a few items."

The arts festival is the main fundraiser for the Southern Idaho Land Trust, a local conservation group that promotes and oversees conservation easements. Its mission is to preserve open spaces throughout the Magic Valley for future generations. Over 4,000 guests were expected over the weekend.

Wendy Blickenstaff, with the Plein Air Painters of Idaho, said she's interested in being a featured artist at the festival one day. On Sunday, Blickenstaff, of Boise, set up her easel along the shore of the Snake River and painted the afternoon away.

"This is the first time I've been down here and it's just gorgeous," she said. "The hardest part was deciding where to set up because it's beautiful everywhere. It's hard to find a place you don't want to paint.

"I was really impressed with the art vendors because they are all high quality. This isn't a normal arts and crafts festival, but one I would be proud to be a part of."

Caroline Dolezal, of Twin Falls, sets time aside to visit the festival every year. This year, she brought her daughter and a friend along.

"You always find something unique here," Dolezal said. "I'm sure I'll find something that hits my fancy."

Dolezal's made her way to Ritter Island for 12 years now, and said the setting only complements the event. She hadn't decided yet whether to take home a painting, handmade pottery or a bottle of local wine but knew she would continue her tradition.

"The time of year is perfect, and it's gorgeous down here," she said. "The vendors are great, the music and food is great. Everything is top quality."

Blair Koch may be reached at 208-316-2607 or [blairkoch@gmail.com](mailto:blairkoch@gmail.com).