

What sets Thousand Springs Festival apart?

By Melissa Davlin - Times-News writer | Posted: Friday, September 24, 2010 1:15 am

Is it the gorgeous Ritter Island scenery? The array of crafts? The regional musicians?

The lure of the Thousand Springs Festival has brought arts and crafts fans to Thousand Springs State Park in the Snake River Canyon for 18 years — last year, more than 4,000 people came. But the art isn't the only thing that draws crowds. The scenery, entertainment and people set the event apart from other art shows.

The festival stands out to Twin Falls' Cooc Ohlmstead, who attends arts and crafts events throughout the year. The area is beautiful, the weather usually mellow and the entertainment fun.

"The music is wonderful," she said.

The musical lineup this weekend includes Boise swing group Shakin' Not Stirred, Hailey-based singer Sheryll Mae Grace, Mountain Home singer and guitarist Mike Bush, and Boise bluegrass-celtic-jazz-blues fusion group The Heard.

Another aspect that appeals to Ohlmstead: The event is the primary annual fundraiser for conservation group Southern Idaho Land Trust. It turns the entrance fee into a feel-good deed.

"When you're paying to get in there, you're helping," she said.

But most of all, it's the art that brings her to the park. In recent years, Ohlmstead has walked away with metal art and glasswork. Last year, she bought a piece from artists who make paintings on repurposed tin from old buildings.

"It's really cool because on the back of it, it tells exactly what building it was taken from," she said. "Mine was from New York, I believe."

Organizer Betsy Morishita said this year's festival will feature new artists, including Utah illustrator Cat Napier and Jerome furniture maker Dennis Mitchell.

The event is also kid-friendly, Morishita said. This year, face painters will keep kids occupied from 1 to 3 p.m. each day. The kids' area will also feature tiny organic pumpkins for children to take home.

Photographer Jackie Plastino, who has sold her work at Thousand Springs for the past several years, said the crowds are steady, but the park is never too crowded. It gives her a chance to connect personally with potential customers.

This weekend Plastino will sell landscape photos from her travels, including scenes from Mexico, Argentina, China and Hawaii.

"I always get people who are really interested in photography," Plastino said. "Some people love to tell me about their own photography, and that's always fun to hear."

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