

# Arts in bloom auction to benefit breast cancer

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Would you like a hand-painted plate designed by Kristi Yamaguchi? How about a limited edition signed lithograph by Tony Curtis? Or does a gym bag donated and signed by former Olympic gymnast Mary Lou Retton capture your attention?

Celebrity — and art — lovers will get the chance to bid on these and other items during the Fourth annual Arts in Bloom festival Sunday at Victorian Square. The auction is scheduled for 1 p.m. Booths featuring the work of about 50 other artists and 15 sponsors will line the plaza when the festival starts at 10 a.m. Proceeds from the auction will benefit the Northern Nevada affiliate of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

"They (celebrities) are all wonderful," said Greg von Schottenstein, Sparks Parks and Recreation special events coordinator. "People spent a lot of time and took a spin, and their creative instincts just took over."

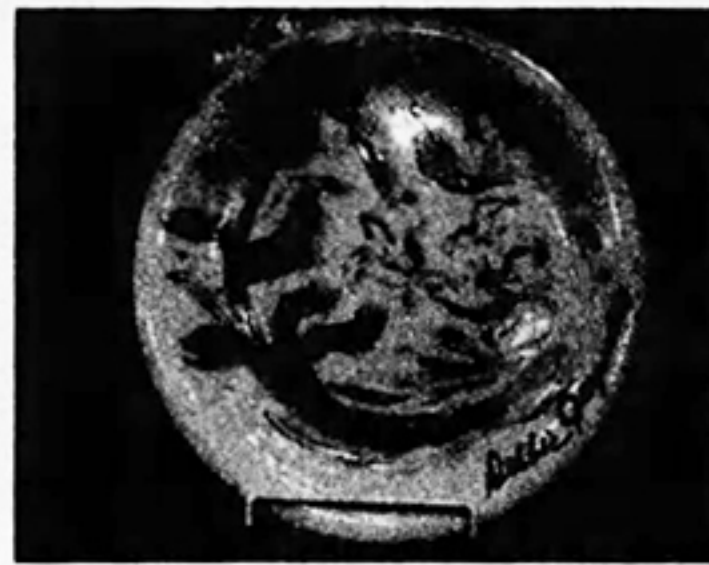
This is the first time the festival has included an auction of celebrity-painted plates from athletes and entertainers.



PROVIDED BY DAMIAN HIRAI

Saxophonist Damian Hirai, 15, will perform before and after the auction.

Organizers chose "inspiration" to be the theme of the plates for the annual Mother's Day event because breast cancer touches so many people. "The number of mothers and women touched by cancer, their stories can be inspiring, that's where we developed the theme of inspiration," von Schottenstein said. "We are also trying to develop an arts and culture program. One of the pieces is to create a signature event not only in the area but attract people from outside the area so the plate component and the Komen Foundation were a nice fit. Some of the celebrities were contacted because they made appearances in the Reno-Sparks



PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF SPARKS

This plate was painted by actress Debbie Reynolds.

area, while others like Yamaguchi were contacted because von Schottenstein previously worked for several companies that managed sports teams.

"We networked," von Schottenstein said. "There were our share of cold calls."

In addition to pieces by David Cassidy, Tony Bennett and Marie Osmond, local entertainers and artists also will be featured.

Jazz saxophonist Damian Hirai is one of several musicians who will be on stage providing music before and after the auction.

"It's for a really good cause and I think it will help because music puts you in a different state of mind," said Hirai, a 15-year-old freshman at Reed High School who won the T-mobile Applause



PROVIDED BY THE CITY OF SPARKS

Singer Keb' Mo' designed this plate.

Youth Artist Award in October 2005.

Washoe Valley artist, Lady Jill Mueller, will be a first-time participant at Sunday's event, displaying her dramatic watercolors and pristine landscapes.

"My painting philosophy is based on my love of nature — being there as one and allowing the world to go by," Mueller said. "When you look inside my paintings you won't find any people. The person in the painting is the one looking at it."

Bonnie "Cassia" Pitkin of Sparks, is a past participant of the Mother's Day event and will exhibit her original oil paintings at this year's festival. The native Nevadan has studied art her

entire life, learning different techniques through formal study and self-discovery.

"Arts in Bloom is a fine art show, which makes it special," Pitkin said. "Each of my paintings is a celebration and I hope to invoke a feeling of intrigue about what inspired each one of them for those viewing my work."

Organizers also want participants to take in the sounds and sights so local restaurants such as A. Paris Cafe and Great Basin Brewery also will be at the festival. More than 1,000 people are expected to attend the event, von Schottenstein said.

"We were fortunate that (Sparks) decided to choose us," said Ann Sullivan-Redding, affiliate director for the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation.

"We will get notice out to the community that we are here to help. The Northern Nevada community is so inundated with under-insured women and under-served women that go without diagnostic treatment until it's too late to get help."

*Sparks Parks and Recreation contributed to this story.*