

BEST OF THE VALLEY!

PHOENIX

PLUS: THE WORST
OF THE VALLEY!
Page 138

333
OF OUR
FAVORITE
THINGS!

Cardinals
Quarterback
Matt Leinart

AND:

Sheriff Joe Just Cost
Us Another \$9 Million

Can Jim Pederson
K.O. Sen. Jon Kyl?

Fall Arts Preview
2006-2007



The Sunny Side of Art

While some appreciate Arizona for its endless sunshine, Canada native Lee Feliciano sees the sun as more than just a tool for a good tan. Feliciano and his wife, Victoria, created Valley of the Sun Solar a year ago to educate people about the benefits of solar energy through art.

"I was so frustrated by the level of ignorance and misinformation about solar energy in Arizona, that we decided to use art as a vehicle to bring awareness, since it has a broader appeal," says Feliciano, who moved to Arizona with his family two years ago.

Valley of the Sun Solar offers greeting cards, T-shirts, giclée prints (reproductions made with ink-jet printers) and other items that showcase art from local and national artists. Ten percent of sale prices go toward supporting solar projects in developing countries or promoting the Solar in the Schools

program, a nonprofit organization created by Solar Energy International.

"It's a way of supporting solar energy, as well as spreading the message about its benefits by educating people with cards and making a donation to a nonprofit," Feliciano says.

At first, Feliciano and his wife weren't picky about the quality of art they received, but today, they have a jury of three artists who select from a submission pool.

John Erwin, a member of the Contemporary Watercolorists of Arizona, is one of the first artists whose work was placed on the Valley of the Sun Solar website. The second-grade teacher at Desert Springs Elementary School says he is thrilled to share his artwork for the Sun Solar art project.

"It's the way to go here in Arizona, since we have plenty of sunshine," says Erwin, a 35-year resident.

According to the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy (DSIRE), of the 20 states that currently use renewable energy sources, Arizona uses the smallest percentage of its most available resource: the sun.

Feliciano doesn't hide his frustration with Arizona's modest use of solar energy. He points to California and New Jersey, where state governments have introduced aggressive solar policies, despite the fact that they have fewer months' worth of solar power than Arizona.

"It is no secret that the sun is Arizona's greatest resource, yet we fail to harness it," Feliciano says. "The fact that Arizona is in many ways a 'solar backwater' should tell us all something."

For more information about Valley of the Sun Solar, visit valleyofthesunsolar.com.

— Ljiljana Ciric



ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Ron Burns

Ron Burns has a bone to pick with anyone who doesn't consider Fido a member of the family. The Scottsdale resident has been painting portraits of pets for more than 15 years. After Burns left his graphic design job to pursue his artistic passion, he soon realized that pets provide a plethora of subject matter.

Burns' acrylics on canvas feature bright, neon colors, and his larger-than-life portraits of canines would bring a smile to any pet lover's face.

His artwork is well-known throughout the country, and as the artist-in-residence for The Humane Society of the United States, Burns says he hopes to raise awareness of the plight of shelter dogs.

"Until every dog finds a home, I don't want to stop painting images that promote that message," Burns says.

Burns created the artwork for Arizona's "pet-friendly" license plate, which promotes spaying and neutering pets. He also

Painted the poster for National Dog Day, a new holiday that will be celebrated for the first time on August 26.

One of Burns' most recent works, *Kong Juice and Cards*, is a new twist on the classic dogs-playing-poker painting. Burns' version features five dogs playing poker with high-tech accessories like iPods and Blackberries in tow. They sip drinks out of Kongs, the cylindrical chew toys that are well known among dog enthusiasts.

Burns says his goal is to capture the personalities of the dogs he paints, which is why he always starts with the eyes.

"Once you get the eyes done, you can't go wrong," he says. "There's a big connection between owner and dog when their eyes connect."

Ron Burns' work is on display at Vessley Fine Art gallery, 4164 N. Marshall Way, Scottsdale, 480-941-4608.

— Stephanie Berger