

Art Show Display Case



The inaugural Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show took place in July 1975. Local artists Bruce Johnson and Reed Dixon created the idea and took it to John Wenzler, then director of Chautauqua Summer Programs. They prepared the grounds and readied for the weekend show. Artists and residents were shocked by the number of people who showed up for the event. Vehicles streamed into town to see art displayed on snow fencing. Bruce and Reed exhibited at the show for years. The second year, the MPs from Indiantown Gap were brought in to help to manage the traffic and use the event as a training exercise.

Local ceramicist Jeff White displayed at the first show. He displayed for many years and helped to start the Emerging Artist program that he judged for decades. This program launched many artists' careers.

The show took hold and became a marker of the town's identity. The show became more successful every year under the leadership of Art Show Director Karl Gettle. He then passed the baton to Linda Bell and she grew and refined the show for decades, making it a national event attractive to hundreds of artists. Linda Bell raised the profile of the food and beverage offerings by bringing in local restaurants to offer a gourmet food component to the show.

Current Art Show Director Kerry Royer says Linda Bell taught her everything she knows about running a national fine art and craft show as we move into the 50th show. Commissioners have officially designated 2024 as the Year of the Arts in Mount Gretna in honor of the 50th year of the Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show, which will take place on Aug. 17 and 18. The celebration will highlight all types of art across the county, including theatre, music, and visual arts.

“The 50th Mount Gretna Outdoor Art Show will honor the impact this nationally ranked event has on our region. The show will celebrate all of the cultural, artistic, educational, and performance events in our town. As we commemorate this milestone, we will recognize how the arts have created our unique sense of place in the Lebanon Valley,” says Kerry.