



DATE September 2, 2008

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This is part of an occasional series by the Sanpete County Travel and Utah Heritage Highway 89 Alliance on the people and places along U.S. Highway 89.

36 Spring City Artists to Open Studios Saturday Sept. 20

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For the National Mormon Pioneer Heritage Area*

SPRING CITY, Sanpete County—Within Utah, perhaps the largest concentration of artists per capita can be found living along Sanpete County's Heritage Highway, in the small town of Spring City.

According to John Stevens, executive director of Spring City Arts, there are between 30 and 40 artists living and working in Spring City, which has a population of approximately 800. "That's a high percentage [of artists per capita]," he said. Stevens notes that there are also many artists residing in other towns throughout Sanpete County.

It is no longer necessary for artists to live close to the galleries that exhibit and sell their work. Artists residing in Sanpete County export their work to many major art centers throughout the United States such as Santa Fe, New York, and Washington, D.C.

Artists are drawn to the Sanpete County area because of its natural beauty as well as the abundance of old buildings, many of which have converted to studios.

On September 20, 36 local artists are opening their studios to the public as part of the fourth annual Spring City Artists Studio Tour. The studio tour takes place in conjunction with a plein air (open-air) competition. The competition, beginning September 17 and ending with a show and sale on September 20, will feature nationally and locally known artists who will compete against each other for awards and cash prizes as they paint scenes around Spring City.

"People really enjoy being able to talk to artists and go and see where they work," said Stevens. "For those who are very interested in artists it's a great opportunity to sit down and talk to them and meet them."

Spring City Arts is a non-profit organization formed to promote the art and artists of Spring City and the surrounding Sanpete County area, according to Stevens. The organization plans the studio tour and plein air competition to give the public a unique opportunity to come and interact with the artists who live in this area that would not otherwise be available, he said.

During the days of the plein air competition, artists set up their easels on many of the quiet roads around Spring City. The beautiful, pastoral scenes of the town provide rich material for artists with diverse tastes and painting styles. Visitors are encouraged to walk around town and watch the artists at work. The paintings are judged at the end of the competition, and works are displayed and available for sale on September 20.

Stevens said approximately 500 people attended the studio tours and plein air show last year. As the events have increased in popularity, he expects attendance to be up by at least 50 percent this year.

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