

Pittsburg to open new art center

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Pittsburg finally has a little place where artists can get together.

The Art Shack, a modular building on Marina Boulevard, is set to open with a reception at 8 tonight during Pittsburg's Hot Summer Nights festivities.

The space will hold fine art classes, while also providing a place for local artists to work in a calm setting, said Rose Mary Tumbaga, the city's art coordinator.

"Basically, it's a place that we can call our own," she said.

Fine art classes used to be held wherever there was an available room, so "If something big were happening, art classes would get bumped," Tumbaga said.

Art teacher Karen Nelson Kelly concurred.

"It's nice to have a permanent place where the supplies are here and ready for the kids to use. I don't have to walk in with my arms full because I'm bringing everything from home," she said.

Youth fine art classes for the fall at the Art Shack will be geared mainly toward home-schoolers ages 8 to 15 in the morning and everyone that age in the afternoon.

On Thursday, Summer Art Camp students from Pittsburg and Antioch were busy creating masterpieces with oil and acrylic paints.

"It was hard to concentrate because of noise from other classes, so the new building is nice because it's the only class," said Gina Quinlan, 12, of Antioch, while painting a master study of Degas of two ballerinas on a stage. She has been in the program for three years.

It was dubbed the Art Shack by local artist Francis Palermo, and the name "just kind of stuck," Tumbaga said.

"It's small enough to be considered a shack rather than a building. It's a really nice shack though," she said.

The Art Shack is for all different kinds of art forms, not just painting. Tumbaga said candy, cookie and jam makers will use the kitchen, the site will have free Wi-Fi Internet access, and local works will be displayed on the walls.

The building will be a semi-permanent home for Pittsburg art for the next several years, until new development or a larger space presents itself, Tumbaga said.

The Art Shack is part of a push to bring more public visual and dramatic art to Pittsburg, and the building will serve as a hub to coordinate artwork placement and artist information, Tumbaga said.

This evening's opening is part of a busy night in Old Town Pittsburg. The night will include music from Latin jazz percussionist and Pittsburg native Pete Escovedo and the PhDs, free food samples from the New Mecca Cafe and fireworks on the waterfront at dusk.

The free food is a way to say thank you to the community, New Mecca owner Guillermo "Bill" Muniz said.

"It's one of our biggest events of the season" because of the combination of things going on, Old Town events coordinator Timi Tumbaga said, adding the Art Shack makes the night that much bigger.

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