

BEDFORD BULLETIN

PTA puts a new twist on the silent auction

By John Barnhart

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Bedford Primary School's PTA came up with a new twist on the silent auction.

Most folks are familiar with the silent auction. People show up at the specified location, at the specified time, peruse the merchandise, and write down their bids. This imposes some limits. There is a limit to how many people who can fit in one place at one time. The number of people who can participate is also limited by how many people are available at the time of the auction.

What if you don't have to hold it in just one place? What if you don't have to hold it at a specific time?

These thoughts occurred to Barbara Owen, a PTA member. The Bedford Primary PTA had two successful, and traditional, fundraisers, during the first half of the year. After all that, they felt that they needed to come up with a fundraiser that didn't hit the parents again.

The fundraisers are important. The PTA uses the money to pay for enrichment programs. They bring in live production companies that stage plays that correlate with the Standards of Learning (SOL). Many of the school's children would not have the opportunity to see a live theatrical production if not for these. The production companies charge \$550 for the performances, which are staged at Bedford Science and Technology Center's (BSTC) Susie Gibson Auditorium. BSTC makes the facility available to the PTA as Bedford Primary has no place to stage anything.

Owen hatched the mobile silent auction idea and passed it by Tammy Overstreet, the PTA's fundraising chairman. Overstreet, in turn passed it to the principal, who bought the idea.



Shelly Latreill, owner of SER Art, shows the custom stained glass butterfly "suncatcher" that she donated to the Bedford Primary School mobile silent auction.

According to Owen, the mobile feature of this silent auction not only opens it up to more bidders, but helps out the merchants who donate items by bringing people into their stores. The PTA hopes that this will be the start of a partnership between the school and Bedford's merchants. They stuck to locally owned businesses. See Page 3A for a complete list of participating merchants.

"Instead of just asking for donations, we can form partnerships," Owen, a Liberty High School graduate, said.

Donations vary according to the type of business. Shelly Latreill, owner of SER Art, donated a custom made stained glass butterfly, an item she calls a "sun catcher" because it is designed to be hung in a sunny window. The butterfly is a three dimensional piece that makes Latreill wish she had a third hand when she assembles it.

Custom stained glass is one of the specialties of the Bedford artist who has operated her North Bridge Street Shop since 2001. The place formerly housed a shoe repair shop in the back and, for the her first two years of operation, people would periodically come in looking for the cobbler.

"They'd walk right past me with with a pair of shoes, she said.

Latreill gives lessons in stained glass every day between 10 a.m and 1 p.m. and between 5:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

R. T. Lyons, another participant, is offering a custom made angel pendant. The pendant on display has three amethysts forming the body and wings with a diamond head. It's set in white gold, with a white gold chain and is only the fourth the Bedford jeweler has made.

He got the idea when he was looking at a display of precious stones at the Smithsonian Institute with a wife and a friend. Three stones happened to be in a position that made him think of an angel. His wife and the friend couldn't see it, but Lyons' jeweler's eye did. He made a sketch and carried it around with him for a year before he made his first pendant.

"If you just sell watches all day, you get bored," he commented.

Lyons said that he always carries a note pad with him, and even keeps one on the night stand by his bed. That way he doesn't have to scramble for something to write on when an idea hits.

He doesn't always have something handy, however. He got the idea for his "Peaks of Otter" cameos while mowing his lawn and had to jump off his lawnmower, after stopping it, of course, and run into the house for his note pad.

The cameos, which use a Shelly Latreill drawing of the Peaks, are cut in onyx in Germany.

The mobile silent auction began Monday and runs until March 21. Checks should be made payable to the Bedford Primary School PTA.