

March 17-18, Peace River National Art Festival, Punta Gorda. Contact: The Visual Arts Center, Charlotte County Arts Center, Richard Sullivan, 210 Maud Street, Punta Gorda, FL 33950; phone 239-293-9448. Email: boulderbrook@comcast.net. Space fee: \$265-\$795. Space size: 12X12 to 12X30. 100% outdoors. Exhibitors: 120.

By Donna Wilson

Florida & National Reporter

This was a first-time show, and we all know about first-time shows. However, because the Festival was basically invitation-only and organized by Richard Sullivan (previously of the well-respected Naples National Art Festival), many of us opted to give this new venue a try.

Sullivan did everything right. The location- a nice park right on the Gulf- was perfect. You could pull right up to your booth location for setup, exhibitor parking was convenient, a hotel directly on site offered discounted rates (still pricey, however), and restaurants were within walking distance. Caliber of work was excellent, balance was good, and as always with Sullivan, he was there the entire time. If you had a problem or question, he handled it immediately.

Considering this was a new show, attendance was great: well over the expected 10,000. (And because a \$1 donation was requested, that figure is relatively accurate.) Patrons were excited about what they saw but simply didn't expect the high caliber work they encountered. Featured artist John Costin did very well, as did some others. A jeweler did well, too, but made only a few very high-end sales. Local wildlife work sold well, as did photography and fiber. My sales were iffy, but I would return, as the potential is definitely here. Others artists I spoke with felt the same. This is a show with a future.