

Publication: Press of Manorville; Date: Apr 3, 2009; Section: Arts & Living; Page Number: A15



Artist Larry Johnston of East Patchogue submits an original painting to Bellport Chamber of Commerce Vice President LuAnn Thompson, right, and Lorraine Fosmire, past president of the South Bay Art Association, for consideration in a contest to choose the art for a poster that will promote the Bellport Festival this summer. JENNETT MERIDEN RUSSELL

Painting a picture of the Village of Bellport

By Jennett Meriden Russell

Larry Johnston has a simple dream. The East Patchogue artist hopes his painting of sailboats leisurely moored in the Great South Bay on a sunny, cloudless day will be chosen for this year's poster to promote the Bellport Day Festival, an annual summer event that touts the virtues of the sleepy, sidewalk business community.

"Just by coincidence, I've done a lot of plein air painting in Bellport and locally over the last couple of years," said Mr. Johnston, whose works have been represented by Chrysalis Gallery in Southampton. "And I had a small painting that I did by the Unitarian Fellowship in Bellport, and I thought, 'Gee that might make a nice poster,' so I submitted it. I'm represented very well in Southampton, but it would be nice to get the local recognition as well."

Members of the community will decide from scores of submitted paintings and photographs which will be used for this

votes for their favorite pieces.

Both the Chamber of Commerce and the South Bay Art Association are hosting the event. Submitted pieces of artwork for the competition include a variety of printable media, including photographs and paintings.

Ms. Thompson, who also owns the Bellport Arts & Framing Studio on Main Street, won last year's competition with a photograph of iceboats sitting on the frozen Great South Bay. The photograph also had a map of Bellport superimposed on top.

A past poster, printed in 1989, was an etching created by another local artist, Jody Love, who has since died. The etching also depicts iceboats, which were used by the U.S. Coast Guard to carry supplies across the frozen bay to Coast Guard outposts on Fire Island during the 1800s. Iceboats have since become synonymous with Bellport and one is depicted on the village's logo.

Lorraine Fosmire, past president of the

Day Festival, which will be held all day in Bellport on July 25, would feature local merchants holding sidewalk sales and neighborhood restaurants providing outdoor dining. Various musical artists will also perform throughout the day. Family activities, such as a dunk tank, rides and games for children, face painting, balloon art and pony rides will also be on hand. The Bellport Bay Regatta will be held at the marina the same day.

The Bellport Chamber of Commerce is offering a limited edition of 300 posters promoting this year's Bellport Day Festival to the public for \$20 each. Ms. Thompson said that posters left over from prior festivals are also available for \$5. Searles Graphics in East Patchogue has created posters for the festival since it began in 1982.

"The posters really have become something of collector items," said Ms. Thompson, who is also current vice president of the South Bay Art Association. "There's

detailed they appear to be photographs.

The first poster promoting the Bellport Day Festival, printed in 1982, was of a 19th century photograph that showed small boats tied up and setting sail from what is now the Bellport Marina. The sepia print gives a snapshot of life in Bellport during its founding days. Women wearing long flowing dresses and large ornate hats can be seen standing on rickety wooden docks waiting to board sailing vessels.

Bellport Village has long been a destination for boating enthusiasts and artists alike. The village has both an ocean and bay beach, which has brought both summer visitors and artists in search of scenic vistas.

In addition to offering a variety of shopping and dining opportunities, the village also boasts one of the region's most noted professional summer stock theaters—Gateway Playhouse.

Founded by captains Thomas and John

year's poster.

LuAnn Thompson, vice president of the Bellport Chamber of Commerce, said that Mr. Johnston's painting is among dozens of pieces of artwork that will be on display tonight, Friday, April 3 from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Bellport Community Center on Bell Street in the village. Visitors will have the chance to cast their

art association, said this year's winner would receive gift certificates to local eateries in addition to having their artwork made into the poster.

"You don't have to live in Bellport to submit your artwork," Ms. Fosmire said. "But submitting artwork is a great opportunity to participate in Bellport's festivities."

Ms. Thompson added that the Bellport

not many left, but anyone who's interested in past posters can come to my shop and pick them up."

Past artists who have won the contest include famed painter/sculptor Malcolm Morley. The British native, who now lives in Brookhaven hamlet, helped usher in a style of painting known as photo, or super realism, which incorporates renderings so

Bell in the early 1800s, Bellport was originally designed to be a seaport. It continues to offer recreational activities including boating and fishing in warmer months and iceboating in the winter.

"Bellport is just a nice place," Ms. Fosmire added. "It has a lot to offer. Nice stores, nice people, you name it, we got it."