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NEWS LOCAL

Art that makes a difference

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Artists at work at Brush off 2015.

Lisa MacColl

Special to Londoner

On May 18, the paint will be flying as 16 local artists compete for bragging rights in the fourth annual Brush Off competition in support of London Children's Hospital. Guests will be able to watch artists create works of art in 30-minute sessions and each session will have a different, pre-determined size of canvas. At the end of each round, guests then vote for the artists they would like to continue into the next round. Artists in the final round create art that is then featured in the live auction, and the artist whose work commands the highest bid is declared the winner of the event. "We wanted to hold a signature event that was fun and interactive. It can get pretty intense. Everyone is a good sport and they have a lot of fun, but half an hour is not a long time to create a piece of art from a blank canvas. People will paint frantically right to the last second. Audience members get the opportunity to see how art is created in real time. Even though we have cocktails and appetizers, it is not a typical gala cocktail event," said Jill Osborne, director development and communications for the London Children's Museum.

Some of the local artists participating this year include Jill Price, Nic DeGroot, who won The Brush Off 2015 and Shane Wilcox. Half of the artists participating in this year's event have participated in the past. For the rest of the artists, the museum tries to represent a variety of styles and networks with local galleries who are showcasing local and up and coming artists, and promising art students. "If the artists are

successful, they can produce four complete works of art in the evening. Some artists plan their projects in advance, but others will take suggestions from the audience during the breaks. We wanted to ensure that the evening was interactive and enjoyable for both the artists and the guests,” said Osborne.

Organizers hope to raise \$20,000 after expenses, and the funds will provide funds to allow students to go on field trips to the London Children’s Museum. The museum works in partnership with the local school boards to assist priority schools. The cost of the trip to the museum, including bus transportation to and from the school, admission, and a pizza lunch is covered by the museum for schools who would not otherwise be about the afford it. The fundraising goal would cover the costs for 700 children. “Teachers tell us often the children are just as excited about the pizza lunch as the trip to the museum because pizza is a luxury they otherwise never have, nor would they be able to afford the \$15 for the field trip. It really puts things in perspective and makes us work hard to support as many children as possible. Our core value and operating principle is to make art accessible and attainable for all. As a not-for-profit charity, we cannot do that without the help of our donors,” said Osborne.

In addition to the live auction of the artwork, there will also be a silent auction with many great prizes, including gift certificates to local restaurants, jewellery items, an adventure with Exodus Escape Room, Airfare from Westjet, packages including wine and beer and other artwork. “It’s a great opportunity for the arts and culture community to come together and support our area children. It’s a relaxed event and good party,” said Osborne.

IF YOU GO:

What: Brush Off 2016

When: Wednesday, May 18, 2016 6:30 p.m.-9:30 p.m.

Where: Goodwill Industries, 255 Horton St, London, ON

Tickets: \$56

For more information: www.londonchildrensmuseum.ca/support/brush

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