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Raue show puts Focus on talented kids

The community's youth will take the stage July 23 to show off their talents at the Raue Center for the Arts in Crystal Lake.

The center is hosting FOCUS 2011, the third annual talent showcase featuring those 18 and younger in the areas of performing arts, visual arts and fashion design.

Unlike in years past, the event is not a competition this year, but more of a celebration of the area's youth, Raue Executive Director Richard Kuranda said.

"We realized very quickly our community is beautifully diverse and eclectic, and there are a ton of great families and great kids," he said. "We just want to celebrate their talents and most of all, their passion for the future."

With roughly 50 participants, the show will feature musical performances, dance, drama, stand-up comedy, fashion design and numerous other talents. As people enter the Raue, they'll see a display of visual arts created by the community's youth.

And the event also will feature the screening of two or three independent short films.

It originated when Connie Perez, owner of Aesthetics in Crystal Lake, approached the Raue about her idea for an area fashion show. She wanted to give the children she'd taught through various sewing classes an opportunity to display their work.

Talk had already been ongoing about the Raue hosting a youth talent show.

"I had a passion for really making this happen and not just being an idea or unique thought," said Perez, co-producer of FOCUS.

Though previous shows included prizes for winners, all participants will receive prizes this year. Organizers found the show was too diverse, featuring participants ranging in age from 4 to 18, to judge.

"We've taken a step back on making it a competition. Art is so subjective," Perez said.

"We don't want to evaluate kids and then not have the opportunity to mentor them."

The event is designed to be both educational and entertaining for the community, organizers say. At the same time, it will connect youth to the community through their arts, they say.

Previous events have included a drum solo, a Maroon Man Group spin-off of The Blue Man Group and a performance of songs from "Wicked."

"Some of this is stuff they do in their basements and nobody knows about it and here it's coming out and people are able to appreciate it," Perez said.

With local businesses, such as Home State Bank, Centegra Health System, Piano Trend Music Company and Sage Products, as sponsors, the event is completely community-based, Kuranda said.

"We're taking pride in our future," he said. "I think that's incredibly rare and noteworthy."

What: FOCUS 2011, 3rd annual talent showcase.

Where: Raue Center for the Arts, 26 N. Williams St., Crystal Lake

When: 7 p.m. Saturday, July 23

Tickets cost \$12 for adults and \$6 for kids under 18.

For more information or to purchase tickets, go to www.rauecenter.org, e-mail boxoffice@rauecenter.org or call -815-356-9212.

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