

## **Full circle**

### Art event lends aid to Food Gatherers

*By Margie Bovee, Staff Writer* Saline Reporter: May 19, 2005

It was a dark and stormy night—or so the story goes—when the idea of the "Circle of Art" was hatched within the walls of the Saline Picture Frame Company.

Winter 2005 was a season that challenged even the most creative, cheerful, upbeat personalities. With a record amount of snowfall, and a seemingly record amount of dreary, damp and gray days, the crew at the Saline Picture Frame searched for a respite.

Owners Peter, Mary, and Sara Bowe, along with their staff, Holly Curly, Sara Martens and Gretchen Grossman, pondered the question of how they might pull some sunlight into their own lives as well as those around them.

"Our fall open house was a great success, but we were looking for an event that would make a positive impact on the community and make people happy," says Mary Bowe.

THE GROUP decided to hold a fund-raiser for Food Gatherers. Mary views the charity as a hub for all other local nonprofits who serve the hungry.

They decided to call the event "A Circle of Art" because they view the image of the circle as a symbol of the interconnectedness between artists and the community.

The Bowes' plan was to ask artists to donate small piece of art. They hoped that if the word spread among their artist friends, they would garner enough donations to stage a successful auction.

As the artwork began to flow into the shop, the Bowes and their children, Alice and Grace; their employees; and their friends, Valerie Mann and Kathy Rhadigan, began the task of matting the artwork, advertising the event, and organizing the auction process.

THE RESULTS were overwhelming. By May 9, the opening day of the "Circle of Art," 188 artists had donated 312 pieces of art.

During the week of the exhibit, upward of 500 art lovers came through the doors of the Picture Frame Company to view the work and begin the bidding.

Sunday, May 15, the final day of the auction, was marked by a gala celebration, complete with wine, fruit, chocolate, and cheese. Visitors strolled through the shop, pausing to register a new bid or nervously checking an existing bid.

AT THE CLOSE of the evening, the Bowes announced the total profits: \$10,500.

Eileen Spring, executive director of Food Gatherers, was effusive in her praise of the event and the experience of working with the Bowe family and their staff. She referred to the recurring theme of the circle:

"This event has shown how one good deed leads to another. The artists have had an opportunity to show their work; the buyers have had the opportunity to purchase great art; and a large number of people will not go hungry. These folks did an amazing job."

According to Spring, the amount of money raised is enough to fund 48,000 meals.

As the Bowes accepted kudos for their well-organized, well-conceived event, they found themselves looking forward to the 2006, second annual "Circle of Art."