bringing the HEAT

ABOVE: David Bernard Sr. examines a red hot piece of metal as he begins to form it into a small knife Saturday during the Fire and Water Festival at the NuNu Arts and Culture Collective in Arnaudville. BELOW: John Forbis adds fuel to the furnace in which he was creating smelt iron the way it was originally produced over a thousand years ago.

Arnaudville festival showcases town's charms, artists and French heritage

BY HEATHER OSBORNE
Special to The Advocate

ARNAUDVILLE—An arts and music festival launched to showcase this Acadiana town’s charms and French heritage after hurricanes Katrina and Rita returned for its eighth annual celebration Saturday.

Fire and Water: La Feu et l’Eau gave artists that ranged from pottery makers to iron shapers a chance to show off their artwork to the community at the NUNU Arts and Culture Collective.

The free, three-day festival kicked off at 11 a.m. and continued throughout the night Saturday as hundreds of festivalgoers circulated from one white-pitched tent to the next, interacting with artists and artisans and stopping to grab a bite to eat from the local food vendors.

“We are art lovers, and we stumbled across this festival last year,” said festivalgoer Sherry Klump of Lafayette. “We think this festival is really neat, so we decided to come again.”

Jonathan “Feral Opossum” Mayers, a local artist from Baton Rouge and the festival’s curator of art, said the festival offers the community a unique opportunity to give individuals a sense of belonging, as well as build the community and make the town of Arnaudville better.

“This festival has produced a lot of great things,” Mayers said. “A lot of ideas have come out of the La Feu et l’Eau and just this area with the connections with the French culture. You have the ability to speak French with a lot of people comme moi — like me.”

He said the festival on Sunday will have works from painter Alex Bien-Aime, of Haiti, as well as from Richard Dorvil, a journalist and photographer of the Haitian people and culture.

La Feu et l’Eau was birthed following the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita as a way to develop the Arnaudville community and draw in more settlers, according to Mayers. Since then, the festival has developed into a celebration that features artists, performers and cultural workers in the surrounding communities.

“Everybody who creates things around here, around the region really, can plug...”
in here and have their booths set up, so everyone in this area can enjoy their arts and crafts,” Mayers said. “Most everybody does some kind of arts and crafts or plays music in this area, so a lot of people have a lot of appreciation for things like this.”

Musical performers on Saturday included Bonsoir, Catin, as well as the Haitian musician Jean Jean Roosevelt and Friends, Joey Wilson and Cher Couvillion, Scott Elder, Jaret Gustafson, and Seth Finch.

Arts and crafts vendors offered an array of unique creations, such as jewelry, pottery, paintings, metalwork, blown glass sculptures and homemade soaps.

In addition, artists and artisans demonstrated their crafts, as The Association of Metalworkers of Louisiana did with a demonstration of its use of fire and water to shape metalwork into pieces of art.

Devin Lanclos, 7, a student of the Cecilia French Immersion Program, was among the happy festival participants. He proudly displayed his self-portrait and practiced speaking French to the bilingual festivalgoers.

“I like being at this festival because everybody likes our artwork, and we get to speak French,” Lanclos said.

As the La Feu et l’Eau continues on through Sunday, the surrounding communities are encouraged to visit fireandwaterfestival.org for the detailed schedule of events and come out and experience all that the festival has to offer.