Project takes flight

Pelicans on Parade unveiled Saturday

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LAFAYETTE — Pelicans on Parade, a joint project by the Lafayette Parish School Board and the Acadiahs Arts Council, took flight Saturday night with the unveiling downtown of about 70 fiberglass pelicans that have been transformed into pieces of art by local students and artists.

The project, which will raise money for the school system and area nonprofit organizations, featured all sculptures on display in one centralized location.

"For one night only all of the pelicans are in the downtown area, so all the sponsors and artists and Artwalk participants can see them all in one location," said Naomi Celestin, community education coordinator for the Acadiahs Arts Council.

Each bird, which was constructed by Fiberglass Plus, and based on Lafayette visual artist David Pach's design, cost sponsors about $2,200. The birds were then detailed by students in several area schools and artists in the community.

"The fiberglass model is basically a blank canvas for the artist to decorate," said Buddy Palmer, Acadiahs Arts Council director.

Palmer said that the birds will be placed in various locations around Lafayette, and after a six-month display period, sponsors will have the opportunity to donate the birds back to the project for auction. A few pelicans will also be put on display in New Iberia and Abbeville.

"The pelicans will remain at their designated locations until Mardi Gras 2002," Palmer said. "At that time, sponsors can designate any nonprofit in the community to be the recipient of the sale."

Birds will then be sold in live or online auctions.

According to Celestin, a similar project involving 113 fish in New Orleans netted more than $500,000 for 60 local nonprofits. Celestin said the average final auction price in New Orleans was more than $6,000, and one fish sold in the neighborhood of $30,000.

"There are buyers worldwide who are collecting these animals," Celestin said.

Warren Steffens walks past one of the Pelicans on Parade pieces Friday in front of the Evangeline Hotel on Jefferson Street.