

LEND A HELPING PAW TO FAMILIES WITH ILL CHILDREN



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NEWS RELEASE

BEARS ARE COMING OUT OF HIBERNATION

Spokane's Ronald McDonald House Plans to Raise Funds with its Art-Bear Fundraiser

(Spokane, WA) The Spokane Ronald McDonald House announces its launch of “Bear Necessities”, an unparalleled arts celebration and charity event designed to benefit families with seriously ill children receiving treatment at area hospitals. The first round of life-size bears, each artistically adorned with an individual motif, will be unveiled and introduced by bear artists and sponsors at the Riverpark Square Atrium on Tuesday, April 12, at 10:00am.

The spectacle of bears will include ornamental designs – from traditional to extraordinary - inspired by Monet paintings, nature, wildlife, and other remarkable scenes. The campaign is a regional art project modeled after several successful fundraising initiatives in over 40 cities around the country including “No Moose Left Behind in Coeur d’Alene and “Pigs on Parade” in Seattle.

“We started working on the “Bear Necessities” over a year ago. We’re thrilled to be the beneficiaries of such a fun project” said, Mike Forness, Executive Director of the Spokane Ronald McDonald House. “We’re hopeful this campaign will bring community leaders, charitable donors, artists and residents together , while benefiting the community with tourism dollars and civic pride” Forness said.

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“Local artist and award winning sculptor Jerry McKellar designed the original bear while Precision Fiberglass in Airway Heights is manufacturing them. A roster of artists from the Spokane region were selected to design and personalize 40 - 5.5 foot-tall x 4.5 foot-wide fiberglass bears,” said Forness. Each bear is available for sponsorship by a business or individual. About 30 bears remain who need sponsors, who pay \$5,000 to \$10,000 depending on whether or not they wish to keep their bears permanently.

Among well-known area artists painting bears are Ken Spiering who’s created “Wet Behind the Ears” for Comcast; Kay O’Rourke who’s produced “Kody and Blue Fishin”; and John Jennings who’s produced “Day Dreamer” for Wendle Motors.

“So far, we’ve had tremendous support from the community,” said Forness. “Mayor West and artist Dorothy Fowler have agreed to serve as the project’s Honorary Co-Chairs, Central Pre-Mix has generously donated their time and materials to construct the bear pedestals, and the area Lions Clubs are serving as the “Bear Transport Force” and will move the nearly 60 pound bears to various locations during the course of the project. The response has been great” added Forness.

The bears will be placed in highly visible public locations throughout the Spokane area where they will be exhibited until auctioned at the Ridpath Hotel on October 8. “There’s no way to know how much will be raised. It all depends on how popular they are, and how many bidders there are per bear. Some of the moose in Coeur d’ Alene sold for nearly \$30,000,” said Forness.

For information on sponsoring a bear, please call 509-993-6018 or visit www.thebearnecessities.org.

The Spokane Ronald McDonald House will receive the proceeds from the bear sponsorships, auction and merchandise sales. The Ronald McDonald House provides a “home away from home” for families who travel to Spokane seeking medical care for their children.