

Orchard Lake Fine Art Show canceled because of COVID-19 pandemic

By Terry Jacoby For MediaNews Group
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Artist Judge Sally Bright (from left), Orchard Lake Fine Art Show Founder Patty Narozny, Outstanding Artist Award winner Boris Kramer and West Bloomfield Township Clerk Debbie Binder pose at an award ceremony.
(Courtesy HotWorks)

Patty Narozny had expected that this year the show would go on in West Bloomfield Township, but then came news the 18th annual [Orchard Lake Fine Art Show](#) was canceled.

The popular fair scheduled for next weekend was canceled at an emergency executive board meeting at noon Thursday. That's when Narozny, owner of Hot Works fine art and fine crafts shows and executive producer of the Orchard Lake Fine Art Show, learned her permit was revoked in the face of rising COVID-19 cases. This came as Michigan reported 645 new cases on Thursday afternoon with infection numbers continuing to rise, months into the pandemic.

Narozny was surprised and disappointed to get the news on Thursday afternoon. "On June 10 we had a meeting with West Bloomfield Township officials (township supervisor, chief of police, fire marshal, code enforcement, parks and rec, the chamber) and Hot Works was given permission to move forward with the Orchard Lake Fine Art Show, July 25 and 26, 2020," she said in an email. "At that meeting, they were advised that, by moving forward with the show ... all of us would be putting lots of hard work and tens of thousands of dollars into the show for creating artwork, advertising, travel, signs, printing, mailings, insurance, vendors, etc. — happily getting ready for a first show for everyone in four months."

She says the township had been following one of Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's executive orders while the Oakland County Health Department followed a different one

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"I've checked with an attorney, and the township gave me bad advice and put me in the wrong direction," she said. "Based on Executive Order 110 being used by the county, the (crowd) limit is 100. To try to work around the order, we spent all night Tuesday night, reworking the map to further spread out the show. ...

"I am sorry for any inconvenience," she added. "As everyone knows, I tried my best to make this happen — especially to give an example for other art shows around the country to re-open."

West Bloomfield Township Supervisor Steven Kaplan said the township had no choice in cancelling the show. "The last thing we wanted to do was cancel this event, which is one of the jewels in the community," he said in a telephone interview. "In fact, I would say to you that if the township board did not revoke the permit we could be liable, if people were to get sick like at Harper's Bar or Torch Lake or the Jobbie Nooner," where large groups of people not wearing masks turned into new COVID-19 outbreaks.

He said the township worked with Narozny and advocated for the show to the health department. "I think they could've held their event with the safety preparations that Patty Narozny and her staff put in place," he said. However, "It's not for us to say which laws we like and which ones we don't."

Narozny had planned the show with all booths 3 feet apart, while requiring vendors, volunteers, artists and visitors to wear masks. The annual fair has been voted one of the top 100 art shows in America for 12 years in a row, and it includes a \$1,000 prize for Best of Show, which was previously awarded.

Artists chosen for the show will receive refunds or may apply booth rent to next year's show or another Hot Works show, she says, adding that any artist already juried for this year is automatically accepted for next year's show, July 23-24, 2021.

The event also was to include Bath Planet's Youth Art Competition, which encourages students ages 5-13 to enter their original and personally handmade art in all disciplines. "This program exposes young artists to the rules and entrepreneurship opportunity of being part of a professional art show and exhibition," Narozny says. "Young artists are encouraged to speak with the professional artists in the show and to ask them questions about participating in art shows as a career."

More than 2,800 students have participated in this program in the previous 17 shows, she says.

"I want to thank everyone for putting your trust in me in making this event happen," Narozny said on Thursday. "Through this, we know the importance of our actual art shows and will continue to work for the artists in bringing them back to business."

The show is just the latest in a long string of entertainment and other event cancellations made necessary by the pandemic, which worldwide has sickened more than 13.7 million people since it emerged late last year, killing a reported 586,000 — about 138,000 of those deaths in the United States and more than 6,000 in Michigan.

