

# Suncoast Arts Fest Uses New Technology to Promote the Arts

By Dara Tucker

The Fine Arts of the Suncoast, a not-for-profit organization, which sponsors the Suncoast Arts Fest (SAF) at The Shops of Wiregrass, is bringing cutting edge technology to the area this year, as the organization introduces mobile marketing. Last year more than 101,000 visitors enjoyed 103 various visual and performing artists on January 23 and 24 at the Suncoast Arts Fest. Event organizers were amazed at the number of times they witnessed visitors calling friends giving directions to the event location. SAF organizers decided that having a map or directions to the event site on a mobile device was a primary goal for the 2011 Suncoast Arts Fest, which will again have the fine arts event at The Shops at Wiregrass in Wesley Chapel and also include additional art happenings at seven locations across Pasco County and one in Tarpon Springs.

Show organizers investigated many methods of mobile marketing. "We decided to use two of the

new forms of media, the QR (Quick Response) code and an SMS (Short Message Service or text otherwise known as text messaging) mobile website to promote the Suncoast Arts Fest in 2011. These elements were decided on because QR codes, which look a lot like a UPC code, are easily read by smart phones. Text messaging can be read by any mobile phone. These, combined with print and websites to show a visual picture and directions on how to use them, is perfect to reach the majority of our audience. The SAF conventional website will allow all visitors to view everything about the event at [www.suncoastartsfest.com](http://www.suncoastartsfest.com) as well," explained Pam Marron, SAF co-director.

Smartphone users can point their cell phone camera towards a QR code, scan it and be able to be directed to a



This year, the Suncoast Arts Festival is going high-tech. Smartphone users can download the app and scan the QR code (facing page) to get all of the latest information about the festival.



mobile website, an online video or a restaurant menu. The possibilities are endless. Users can scan QR codes from almost any surface. Companies are using print media, television and online opportunities to allow users to scan codes that will deliver individuals directly to their immediate point of interest.


Robert Caputo from Florida Communications Group has worked with the Fine Arts of the Suncoast in the mobile marketing efforts for the


upcoming Suncoast Arts Fest. Robert explains, "The Suncoast Arts Fest is using QR codes, accompanied by traditional and online media to deliver a truly unique experience to people who are looking to receive exclusive information and content about this annual event in January. The SAF is going to use newspaper and online banner ads to introduce people to their own QR code. Smartphone users will be given the opportunity to scan the SAF code and be delivered to a fully functional

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mobile website. This website will feature all of the different elements of the Suncoast Arts Fest in the palm of your hand.



Whether an individual wants to learn more about the beneficiary, location of artists, chalk artists, entertainment, food, hotels, entertainment or sponsors, SAF is going to offer dedicated splash pages that exclusively address a unique component of the event. All of this is simply a touch away on a user's mobile device."

Between now and the show on January 22 and 23, SAF will also employ a text message campaign that will be supported by traditional media. People that would like to get regular updates, offers and information from SAF will be able to opt in to receive text alerts. This can be done in addition to or as an alternative to scanning the QR code.

The code, developed by Florida Communications Group for SAF, will also have the QR codes placed in plain sight throughout The Shops at Wiregrass as well as on T-shirts. The pur-

pose of this is to allow people on-site and beyond to be able to have information delivered in real-time. Maps, discounts, and performance updates can all be sent to users through the use of SMS and QR codes. As a result, attendees of the Suncoast Arts Fest will have all the information that they could ever need, delivered to them directly in whatever media is most comfortable to them.

Fine Arts of the Suncoast is one of the first non-for profit groups in the area using this technology to increase the awareness of their cause, which is to help supplement funding for arts education in schools. In past years the Fine Arts of the Suncoast has been able to raise funds from the Suncoast Arts Fest to provide art supplies to Pasco County public and private schools, send aspiring high-school students to Portfolio Day at Ringling College of Art and Design, and create mobile art tubs for teachers to check-out to supplement their arts programs. After surveying local art and music teachers to hear what their needs are for this year, Fine Arts of the Suncoast developed a grant system to help support teachers in need. For example a \$500 grant would allow an elementary

school teacher to purchase enough clay for each child in the school to make their own piece of pottery. In addition to providing grants to schools with the proceeds from this year's events, visitors to the Suncoast Arts Fest can directly sponsor a school's request to fund needed supplies.

Smart phone users need to download a phone compatible QR code reader (SAF is using the most universal ScanLife reader at [http://web.scanlife.com/us\\_en](http://web.scanlife.com/us_en)). A picture is taken of the QR code which directs the smart phone to open the

mobile site for Suncoast Arts Festival.

For more information about The Suncoast Arts Fest at The Shops at Wiregrass on January 23 and 24, visit [www.suncoastartsfest.com](http://www.suncoastartsfest.com). Sponsors, artists, youth entertainers and volunteers can still apply to the SAF by e-mailing [info@suncoastartsfest.com](mailto:info@suncoastartsfest.com). Sponsors interested in trying out this combined media platform through the event can contact Pam Marron at [pmarron@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:pmarron@tampabay.rr.com) or call 727-375-8986.

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