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After 5: Open Door Policies

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Traditional businesses welcome after-hours foot traffic with Art Walk

Downtown businesses are getting into the Springfield Art Walk act. The October edition features nontraditional art supporters such as Obelisk Home, Nonna's Italian Café, Fitzwilly's Gifts, Bodhi Salon and the Park Central Branch Library. Another example, St. John's affiliate Inveno Health, serves as a house of medical research by day and a gallery of art by night - at least on First Friday Art Walk evenings.

Probably the most institutional site on the roster - the firm has commercialized such products as alcohol-free hand cleanser Theraworx - Inveno sprinkles its 429 Boonville Ave. building with local artwork and swings its doors wide open.

"We open the front door in the reception area all the way back to our warehouse," says Inveno Operations Manager Matt Price. "Our art is in the entire building. Our building, too, is part of the art." On Oct. 2, Inveno will showcase painter Stephanie Cramer.

For David Crump, owner of Global Fayre, 324 S. Campbell Ave., there wasn't much question about his business joining the Art Walk roster.

"The opening day of the store was on Art Walk, which was a crazy thing to do. We were still opening boxes when Art Walk started," Crump says of that December 2007 night. He hasn't missed an Art Walk since, and next month will display the World Wide Photo Walk exhibit, a collection of pictures taken by 27,000 photographers at 900 locations on a single day this summer. Locally, 40 photographers ages 10 to 70 participated. Crump says the Art Walk enables him to reach a different crowd than during regular business hours. And in recent months, he's added a fundraising element to the evening.

In August, Global Fayre donated \$1 for each transaction during Art Walk to Kiva, a global microlender. Last month, Crump partnered with Team Vision Ozarks, a local group of marathon runners whose efforts raise support for World Vision, a worldwide Christian humanitarian organization that works with children in poverty.



Provided by INVENO HEALTH

This painting and others by Stephanie Cramer will beckon Art Walk participants passing by Inveno Health's Boonville Avenue office.

"We used the Art Walk to have (the local) leader, Chris, run a marathon on a treadmill outside the store," Crump says, adding that \$500 was raised that night and nine kids were sponsored.

There are roughly 25 member entities of the non-profit First Friday Art Walk Inc., which organizes the monthly events.

Members pay \$60 a month - a fee Crump says is worth it. "We do want to see commercial benefit from being part of First Friday," he says. "From a pure business marketing point of view, it makes obvious sense."

Price says Inveno sees marketing opportunities, but it's also meeting the spirit of the IDEA Commons initiative launched by Missouri State University. IDEA stands for innovation, design, entrepreneurship and art, and the school intends to create a cluster of entities downtown in pursuit of those ideals.

Before Art Walk, Inveno had the first three covered. "We went out to find a way to bring in that fourth piece, so we could actually be the entire scope of what IDEA Commons means," Price says of bringing artwork into his office.