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Ronayne: Irene Deely is changing Garden City's image

On June 29, I got glimpses of past, present and future while event-hopping.

First stop: the future. Irene Deely, also known as the "Woman of Steel," threw a party to unveil plans for an "Alley Arts and Cultural District" behind her gallery at 3640 Chinden Blvd.

Her vision: "Live, Love, Cre8: Artists inspiring one another and the community in which they live."

The artists include Steve Fulton and Sam and Anneliessa Stimpert.

Steve's Audio Lab sound stage and recording studio and the Stimperts' Visual Arts Collective will move into an existing building there in September, Irene told me. (VaC will amplify its gallery with a wine bar, café and stage.)

Next door she'll build lofts with galleries and retail on the ground floor — hopefully affordable enough for artists. This summer, artists will "cre8" an entry arch and sculpture garden linking Chinden with the alley.

"Irene's art is tough and suggestive," party guest Jeanette Ross said, pointing to a 12-foot-tall sculpture behind the gallery.

"There's life inside this steel, just like there's life inside the strip malls of Garden City. There's more here than meets the eye."

Tom von Alten, Judy Holcombe, and Nan Rick nodded in agreement.

"It takes courage to be the first to say, 'We can change the Garden City image,'" Tracy Rowe added.

"For new people, Chinden doesn't have a stigma," Kandy Weaver responded.

"It's close to downtown and the river. The new Waterfront District is phenomenal!"

"Irene's changing this end of town, for sure," Tracy said. "She's avant garde, not your normal...well, she's WELDING, for Pete's sake!"

Moving into the present, I caught the end of Idaho Peace Coalition's "Poetry for Peace" reading at Big City Coffee in the Linen District.

Co-organizer Lou Landry is seeking people who want to give voice to peace through poetry and prose for a 24-hour vigil.

"We're not going quietly into the great good night!"

Information soon at www.peacecoalition.us/idaho/.

A flash from the past: Partners Elizabeth Tullis and David Hale, interior designer Kerry Tullis and architectural designer Dwaine Carver have transformed the Travelodge at 1314 Grove St. into The Modern Hotel. Its hip new bar and blue-lit lanai were crowded Friday after an opening bash.

Elizabeth summed up the management's core values as we stood in the lobby between photos of David's grandmother, a Radio City Rockette, and her grandmother, who ran "The Modern," a Basque boardinghouse in Nampa.

"These two women, who were contemporaries, represent everything we love about America: glamour and home-grown hospitality."

Sharing the Fourth with Friends

Bright red, white and blue balloons waving in the early morning light caught my eye as I drove down Capital Boulevard on the Fourth of July.

I couldn't resist stopping to photograph them and the crowd patiently waiting in line in Julia Davis Park to eat pancakes flipped by Gem State Kiwanis.

Hundreds of oldsters, youngsters and every-age-in-betweensters were there, including Duncan Grandin and Andy Erstad, who hailed me, and Kiwanis volunteer Jennifer Matoske.

Later that night, as I watched the glorious fireworks at Ann Morrison Park from Michelle and David Crawforth's Crescent Rim backyard, I recalled Mayor Dave Bieter's July 3rd e-mail: "I've always thought of the Fourth of July as a day of thanksgiving, a chance to count our blessings for living in such a great democracy. If you see a member of our armed forces, a police officer, a firefighter or a paramedic, thank that person for helping to keep us all safe and free."

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