Cape artist, author make inland connection

Don Ruane, Special to the News Star 6:29 p.m. EST February 2, 2015

With a coastline and canals providing access to Matlacha Pass and the Caloosahatchee River it might be hard to associate Cape Coral with the Arts of the Inland nonprofit that held an art and music festival Saturday in LaBelle.

But Judy and James Usavage of Cape Coral made the connection.

They drove to the Hendry County location next to the Caloosahatchee River to sell his books and her acrylic paintings.

“I like writing as much as some people enjoy reading,” said Usavage, who is working on his fifth book.

He specializes in thrillers.

While he talked, Judy strolled through the show in Barron Park, also on the shore of the Caloosahatchee, along with her small dog, Chloe. She carried a camera and moved quickly to photograph three ibis resting on and framed against the blue sky by the limbs of one of the many oak trees in the park.
Arts of the Inland was formed to promote the arts and culture in Southwest Florida's inland communities. Member works are on exhibit in galleries at Lehigh Regional Medical Center and Keiser University in Fort Myers. The group has about 100 members. Last weekend's festival was the fourth for the group and the largest yet, according to president Lavon Koenig. There were 36 artists entered in the show.

“This show gives people a cultural experience. These are all local people,” said Koenig. The Lehigh Acres arts community was well represented with at least four exhibitors. Robert and Leslie Patrick of Lehigh were selling colorful handmade products while the blue river flowed beyond their tent.

“We sell hammocks and hammock swings. Some people use the swings for cats or plants,” said Robert Patrick. They call the business Indigenous Crafts.

Leslie is from Honduras and the hammocks are made as members of the Garifuna tribe make them in that country. The Patricks import some hammocks to help the tribe and as a result help Leslie’s family still in Honduras.

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