

Gazette

Open-air artists' market to begin in new alley

by Meredith Hooker
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From colorful, knitted cell phone holders to sparkling jewelry to Moroccan lamps, south Silver Spring's Artists Market will have something for everyone.

Starting 10 a.m. Saturday, local artists will be able to display and sell their work in Arts Alley at Blair Mill Road.

The market, which will be open every Saturday, will run until Christmas, then pick back up again in the spring.

The market is essentially an extension of Alchemy, a store located across from the alley that allows artists to show and sell their work, said store owner Brenda Smoak. It was always part of her business plan to add a market, she said.

Initially, Smoak wanted to hold the market next to her property on land the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority owns, said Susan Hoffmann, marketing and special events manager for the Silver Spring Regional Center. However, the adjacent Arts Alley at Blair Mill Road seemed a more viable option.

"It just seemed like that would be the right place to hold this and it would activate the alley," Hoffmann said.

Pyramid Atlantic Art Center tried holding an artists market a few years ago, Hoffmann said, but it didn't work well because there wasn't much pedestrian traffic.

"We're hopeful this will be successful," she said.

Smoak said while the idea is similar, she thinks this market will be different than Pyramid Atlantic's, particularly because there will also be food available, with Mayorga Coffee Factory nearby and Moorenko's Ice Cream and The Gallery Restaurant opening soon.

"As soon as all three have outdoor seating, it's going to be great," Smoak said.

She has high hopes for the market, which will have a special opening Sept. 23-25, with events starting that Friday evening.

"We've got a really nice mix, with music and a poet and a drum circle," she said. A Jewish women's a cappella group will also sing.

"I want to build the momentum so everyone comes to that venue," she said.