

# Artventures to open gallery, mentoring site in Alma

By LINDA GITTLEMAN  
Gratiot Managing Editor

A brand new community venture in Alma is scheduled to open Friday with a special program from 7 to 9 p.m.

Called Artventures, located where the old Billigs Flower Shop used to be, the spot will serve as mentoring space and gallery for adults or students - any local artist, said C. Sandy Lopez-Isnardi, Alma College professor of art and design and one of the organizers.

The Creative Arts Guild of Mid Michigan, the Pine River Arts Council, Alma College and the public schools throughout the area have joined together to create the gallery and workshop that focuses on the visual arts.

On Friday, artworks will be displayed from floor to ceiling and will have come from all corners of the area: art teachers, students, residents, members of the art council, or simply anyone who wanted to show off their efforts, said Lopez-Isnardi.

"Gratiot County is one of the most arts-impo- verished areas in the state," she said. "Arts have been slashed by the government and we need right brain thinking. Albert Einstein said we need sciences *and* the arts. Hemingway, Edison said the same thing.

"Back in the 1980s, corporations were com- plaining that there weren't enough creative thinkers," she contin- ued. "There's been a problem with the arts in education and we need

something."

Alma native Kurt Was- sensar bought the old opera house building and he's letting the group use the space rent free to help start the program.

While the four part- ners are committed to the program, so are a host of others who have made donations, includ- ing Helman's Market, Pizza Sam's, ABC Music, First Bank and Alma True Value Hard- ware.

Still more include Larry LaLonde Salons, Commerical Bank, and State Road Animal Hos- pital; Sherwin Williams donated paints and supplies and the old Of- fice Center donated fur- niture.

Church's Jewelers, Needhams Home

Center, and the former Kiltie Korner have made donations as have Alma College President Jeff Abernathy, Crystal Wilson, Dr. Vicki Ches- sin and Brandon Snook.

At least 100 pieces of art will be exhibited from Friday until Jan. 3, Lopez-Isnardi said.

Workshops and the mentoring program will begin in January.

"I'm so pleased the way the public has re- sponded," Lopez-Isnardi said. "The response has just been amazing."

Artventures is located at 107 E. Superior St. in Alma. Those wishing to make a donation may call 989-400-1233 or, if they wish to mentor, they may call 463-8366.

Music and refresh- ments will be available at the Friday night grand opening.