



photo by Mark Maziarz

Maren Mullin

By Andrew Kirk

When Maren Mullin opened Gallery MAR at 580 Main Street in early 2008, she was the youngest gallery owner in town. Now three years in, she's no longer the baby in the family and instead is gaining a reputation for her activity in the Park City arts community.

"It's well known that skiing draws our visitors to Park City," she said. "But it's truly the arts that keep them coming back year after year."

Mullin describes Park City's vibe as "more funky" than other resort towns.

"We have a wider variety of arts events, more galleries to offer and a longer history," she said.

The community's oldest gallery opened in 1965, Mullin said. The community's "old timers" give it a hippie culture, making art and music more important than politics here, she added.

Mullin is a supporter of the Park City Gallery Association begun decades ago but resurrected in recent years by the late Connie Katz.

"We put together a new group to help promote Park City as an arts destination," Mullin explained. "Because we have banded together,

we can promote our galleries through a stronger voice."

The community is usually promoted as a ski destination, but the association is working hard to advertise all the events and help people see it as an art destination, too, she said.

The best-known art event is the annual Sundance Film Festival, but others include the annual Kimball Arts Festival, the Park City Performing Foundation's shows, gallery strolls, the Park Silly Sunday Market, the concert series at Deer Valley Resort and free live music weekly at a plethora of locations during the summer.

This year-round line up of quality shows, performances and concerts makes Park City special, she said. People from all over move to the Park City area to leave a corporate lifestyle behind and enjoy the mountains. They choose to be here and that creates a unique kind of community.

Everyone should surround themselves with things they love whether it is relationships, places or fine art, Mullin said.

"Art sustains us, challenges us, allows for reflection and rejuvenation. If that's not living right, what is?"

Having opened just months prior to the

start of the recession, the timing has not been easy for Gallery MAR. Still, Mullin said she has no regrets.

"If you're always waiting for the 'right time' to do anything, it will never come," she added.

By keeping overhead costs low and working six days a week for the first two years, Mullin has stayed afloat. Margins are low on art sales, so a slow economy is especially hard on everyone in the art world, she said.

But most artists have "buckled down and committed themselves to creating the best work possible," she added. "The result is higher quality work and happier collectors."

Connecting an artist with a collector is the most rewarding thing about owning a gallery, Mullin added.

She receives over 300 submissions from artists every year. The theme she's chosen for her own gallery that guides her selections is "fresh" with a sense of whimsy and warmth.

"Because my name is literally on the door, the gallery offerings and setting are a reflection of me and what I like to see," she said.

"I love the connection to the community that owning a business in Historic Park City allows me."