

# Gallery chalks up workshop

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**FORT PIERCE** — Chalk one up for art Saturday at the A.E. Backus Gallery & Museum.

The gallery in downtown Fort Pierce will conduct a free workshop on sidewalk chalk art from 10 a.m. to noon in preparation for a chalking competition that will be part of the 18th annual Backus Art Festival on March 3 and 4.

"We're holding the workshop because this kind of art is new to most people," said Kathleen P. Fredrick, the gallery's executive director, "and we want to give the opportunity to learn about it and get experience with it before the competition."

It's new to most people, but chalk painting on the street actually dates back to 16th-century Italy, where it became known as "Madon-

nari" because most paintings were of the Madonna, the Virgin Mary.

"Most people, when they think about chalk on a sidewalk, visualize hopscotch," Fredrick said, but accomplished street painters are capable of creating "trompe l'oeil" (literally "fool the eye") scenes that look eerily three-dimensional by using layers of chalk to blend colors and create shadow, contrast and depth.

To help newcomers learn the tricks of the trade, Judy Pardo of Orlando, a nationally recognized chalk artist and winner of last year's contest, will help teach the workshop and then take participants outside to give it a try on the sidewalks around the gallery.

"This is a hands-and-knees-on activity," Fredrick said.

The workshop Saturday

**What:** Sidewalk chalk art workshop

**Where:** A.E. Backus Gallery & Museum, 500 N. Indian River Drive, Fort Pierce

**When:** 10 a.m. to noon Saturday

**What to expect:** A lesson in the art of sidewalk chalk painting and an opportunity to try it out.

**Cost:** Workshop and materials are free

**Contact:** (772) 465-0630 or check out [www.backusgallery.com](http://www.backusgallery.com)

and the competition in March are both free; even the pastel chalk, the preferred medium for accomplished sidewalk painters,

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"You cannot legislate, nor can you afford to create, a perfect world," Cooper said.

But, after dealing with two pedestrian deaths in the last year, council members were unwilling to let go of all their plans for more sidewalks and increased safety for people walking in the community.

Kelly and the rest of council asked city staff members to identify a list of places where asphalt paths could — and should — be built.

Cooper suggested starting

them to postpone that plan until they discussed the 2006-07 budget.

But Public Works Director Don Freedland assured council members the city would not let any grant money slip away and was working to find more cash for future projects.

Without cash to build sidewalks, City Council turned to other pedestrian safety measures and decided to request that the St. Lucie County School District move all bus stops away from intersections and off main roads.

Schools representative Marty Sanders said the dis-

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will be provided for both events.

"We'll also provide Ben-Gay, ibuprofen and sunscreen," Fredrick said.

For the Backus Art Festival in March, Fredrick said, "My goal is to chalk all the way to the (South) Bridge."

That's 160 squares of concrete, most of them 6 by 6 feet or 6 by 8 feet, although some — for the ambitious artists — are much larger. For the art festival in March, a separate side-

walk will be set aside for kids and families.

"Seeing the parents down on their hands and knees creating things with their kids is one of my favorite things about this whole project," Fredrick said.

The sidewalk art from Saturday and the arts festival will be available for viewing until rain and foot traffic wears it away.

"It's fleeting gratification for the artist," Fredrick said.

For more information, call (772) 465-0630 or check out [www.backusgallery.com](http://www.backusgallery.com), the gallery Web site.