

POPULAR KID ON BLOCK: AUCTIONING OF 16 OF CHARLIE BROWN STATUES RAISES ABOUT \$300,000 FOR ART SCHOLARSHIPS FOR LOCAL STUDENTS

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One by one, the adorable Charlie Brown statues slipped through 9-year-old Teresa Kay's hands Sunday afternoon at the Redwood Empire Ice Arena.

Every time the Santa Rosa girl raised her bidding paddle, someone else would top her bid. With her father's hand securely on her paddle, Teresa watched the bidding go to \$10,000, \$12,000 and \$13,000.

But when ``Maestro Brown," a statue of Charlie Brown dressed in a conductor's uniform and holding a baton, went up for bid, Teresa's father, Murray Kay, kept tapping her on the back, his sign that she could keep bidding.

The little girl could barely contain her joy when guest auctioneer John Bain announced she had the winning bid.

``I feel really, really excited and happy," said Teresa. Kay, a real estate investor, will pay \$16,000 in cash for Maestro Brown.

After spending all summer in various locations in Santa Rosa, 16 of the 55 Charlie Brown statues brought in about \$300,000 at Sunday's auction. The highest bid, \$54,000, went to the colorful statue titled, ``Who let the dots out," by well-known artist Tom Everhart.

Lebo Newman, the owner of Liberty Enterprises in Reno and a former Sonoma County businessman, couldn't resist the Schulz/Everhart combination.

``I haven't been in Sonoma County for four years," said Newman. ``I haven't been able to support the community. This was a good way to do it."

A statue of Charlie Brown dressed in a Giants baseball uniform -- signed by all the current players including Barry Bonds, as well as Giants legends Willie Mays, Willie McCovey and Orlando Cepeda -- brought a winning bid of \$43,000. The statue, titled "Say Hey, Charlie Brown," and three other statues were purchased by **Pierre Ehret**, the owner of the Flamingo Hotel in Santa Rosa.

For months, Santa Rosa hosted 55 Charlie Brown statues in an arts and community project called "It's Your Town, Charlie Brown." The project, spearheaded by Charles Schulz's son Craig Schulz, marked the 55th anniversary of the Peanuts cartoon.

Parents and grandparents took little ones all over Santa Rosa on a treasure hunt to find the Charlie Brown statues. The auction was the culmination of a project that captured the hearts of many Sonoma County residents, as well as visitors from all over the world.

In the days leading up to the auction, many locals got the chance to see 53 of the statues all in one place, where they surrounded the baseball diamond next to the Charles M. Schulz Museum on Hardies Lane in Santa Rosa.

The statue autographed by the Giants players and Everhart's statue were both on display in the museum.

Several of the artists who worked on the Charlie Browns were on hand Sunday, posing for photographs and signing autographs for many who had grown fond of the statues.

Zenny Warren of Petaluma was busy getting autographs for her two granddaughters who live in Alameda. Warren said she took her granddaughters to visit 40 Charlie Browns during the summer.

"Charlie Brown brings a smile to your face," said Warren, who works in admissions and records at Santa Rosa Junior College. "People relate to him because he's just a regular ol' guy."

Craig Schulz said he got the idea to bring the statues to Santa Rosa after he saw how successful a similar project was in St. Paul, Minn.,

where Charles Schulz was born. Schulz said he was proud of the work of local artists who participated in the project.

“I was most pleasantly surprised at how the Santa Rosa artists stepped up to the plate and made the designs as good as they are,” he said.

The money raised in the auction will go toward art scholarships for local students, as well as the construction of a bronze statue of Charlie Brown and Linus for the Charles M. Schulz Airport.

Schulz said the art project will continue next summer, with another character from the Peanuts comic strip. But he wouldn't say which character it would be, only that it would be announced late December or early January.

Before the auction began, Schulz took an unofficial survey of the audience in the arena to find out who they wanted the next character to be memorialized.

Snoopy and Woodstock got the loudest cheers.

You can reach Martin Espinoza at 521-5213 or mespinoza@mespinoza@pressdemocrat.com.

Photo: 3 by CHRISTOPHER CHUNG / The Press Democrat
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A photo caption on Page A1 Monday incorrectly identified the name of the Charlie Brown statue bought by Lamar Transki of Santa Barbara. Transki paid \$30,000 for “Full Spectrum Charlie,” by Santa Rosa artist Ellen Blakeley.