

Contributions flow during 'Waterfall Evening'

BENTONVILLE — Artist **William McNamara** and wilderness photographer **Tim Ernst** pooled their talents the night of Nov. 17 for a "Waterfall Evening," a night of gourmet eats, wine and water-related artwork at Compton Gardens. Sponsorships, donations and a silent auction grossed more than \$21,000 for the Illinois River Watershed Partnership.

It was McNamara's first exhibit in five years.

The two men are neighbors in the Upper Buffalo Wilderness Area and donated several pieces, all having to do with water. McNamara's *Above and Below*, a watercolor of a limestone bluff and its reflection on the Buffalo River, brought \$9,300. Ernst's canvas print of *Neil Compton's Double Falls* garnered \$2,500.

The event was the first major fundraiser for the Illinois River Watershed Partnership, formed in December 2005 to protect the Arkansas portion of the Illinois River watershed from degradation. **Delia Haak**, executive director of the partnership, said the group's mission is threefold: to educate watershed residents about how their actions contribute to the watershed environment, to develop and execute water quality monitoring projects and to implement restoration and conservation projects.

The partnership had 135 members before last weekend's fundraiser; 25 more signed up at the party, Haak said. She lauded McNamara and Ernst for their efforts to promote the appreciation of water and other natural resources.

Compton Gardens rests on 6.5 acres near the Bentonville square that was once the home of the late Dr. Neil Compton. Haak said the gardens were a fitting place to have the event since Compton was instrumental in saving the Buffalo River from damming by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a friend to both contributors.

"He influenced their work and their lives, so having it at the garden was significant for them," she said.

About 100 people attended the event. Ernst was on hand to sign copies of his photo books, including his most recent, *Arkansas Waterfalls: Scenic Icons of the Natural State*. A slideshow of images from the book set to music was played at regular intervals and moved one guest to tears, Haak said.

Sales of his books and prints by McNamara were not part of the fundraiser. Works by several artists at Poor Richard's Gallery in Rogers were donated for the cause. Fare was by At Your Service and wine was Post Familie Wineries.

— *Cyd King*



Illinois River Watershed Partnership board member Dan Douglas, executive director Delia and Bill Haak and Gene Pharr, also a board member



Tom McClure and Ellen Turner with RuAnn and Ken Ewing



Illinois River Watershed Partnership board member Uvalde and Jo Lindsey



Dr. Steve and Donna Wood



Illinois River Watershed Partnership board treasurer Jimmy and Terri Mardis with Lara and Michael Lindsey