

Artist Will Help

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If the gradual onslaught of rust and age have gone unnoticed, a sudden brightening of steel and contour may be enough to rekindle the attention of downtown passers-by in the coming weeks.

Beginning Saturday, the Arts Council for Chautauqua County — with the skills of local artist Bartholomew Oneto and help of some downtown businesses — will be sprucing up aging city sculptures with fresh coats of paint.

A specialist in restoration work, Oneto said he and another artist, Christian Park, will begin working on two statues near the Reg Lenna Civic Center downtown on Saturday morning — sanding off rust, priming and painting.

"Every little bit will help," he said about

the sculptures' face-lifts. "Maybe everyone won't notice it, but someone might say, 'Hey, that looks nice.'"

The artist said he plans to work on small downtown restoration projects for many upcoming weekends of warm weather.

"We probably have half a dozen or 10 or so (sculptures) that we'll be doing. We've got some in storage we might display," he said.

At the Arts Council, Executive Director Philip Morris said, "(The sculptures) are really our responsibility and we've been suffering with how to economically (care for) them. We're looking at repairing the ones (sculptures) in storage."

In addition to the support of the Arts Council, the work on Saturday has been made possible by Taco Hut Restaurant on East

Refurbish City Sculptures With New

Third Street, which is helping to furnish materials, and Charles Colden of Persnickety Painting, who has provided the brushes and rollers.

Oneto said some downtown businesses frequently donate small sums of money toward upcoming restoration work. He also works to brighten deteriorating store fronts with fresh coats of paint.

Last year, he said city teen-agers helped with downtown "spring cleanups," removing discarded trash.

"Somebody might send a check to the Civic Center because they know we're going to do storefronts," he explained. "I'm very thankful for store owners because that's what helps me out. That's what makes it worthwhile when you've got merchants (willing to

Coat Of Paint

chip in). There's motivation and inspiration there," he said.

Morris said several community groups work to brighten storefronts and make the downtown more aesthetically appealing.

Of his own support for Saturday's work, Jim Mason at the Taco Hut simply said, "It makes it (the downtown) look alive (to have new paint on sculptures and storefronts). An old rusty iron laying around on the street certainly isn't attractive."

Since people heard about his Saturday plans, Oneto said, "I've got a dozen people that want to help cleanup and paint these couple of statues."

While he won't need the volunteers for this weekend, he said he's sure he'll be able to put them to work in the coming weeks.