

BALLOON TWISTING AN ART FORM

BY BETH FLORIAN

When I think of balloons I think of water balloons, balloon bouquets and twisting balloons to make poodles, cats, swords or the like. I never dreamt that balloon twisting had evolved into creating magnificent life size sculptures. My outlook changed when I saw Swifty the Clown, also known as Allen Stay. Swifty is not your average clown and certainly not your average balloon entertainer.

Allen has been performing since high school. He dabbled with magic, picked up juggling from the book "Juggling for the Complete Klutz"



This train belonged to Allen's grandfather and served as a model for the balloon train.

and joined a mime troupe for five years, during which he learned balloon twisting! Allen has helped make this a new art form and has worked on projects around the United States and overseas. The largest piece he built solo was a half size steam locomotive! (In case you're wondering, balloons are biodegradable. Inflating the balloon begins the process and sunlight quickens it, but the combination of oxygen and ozone attack natural rubber even in the dark).



This train is 25 feet long, uses 3,000 balloons and took 60 hours to build.

Allen's work will adorn the Farmpark

this fall with life size farm themed balloon sculptures including a hay baler, hay wagon, tractor and a farmer or two. With the help of some friends, it will take four days to build using 10,000 to 30,000 balloons! Allen is excited about this project, "It's the first time I'm doing one in my home town!" he says.

Allen's display will run from September 27 through October 5. You can also see him making poodles, cats, swords and other creations at Fall Harvest Festival and the Barnyard Barbecue Bash.