

# Frenchtown visitors mull colorful mules

## Artists decorate fiberglass figures to benefit charities

By John Monteith

"Miles of Mules," a public arts project stretching the 165-mile length of the Delaware and Lehigh Canal corridor, advanced into Frenchtown last week with the installation of "River Mule" and "Kipp's Mule" on Bridge Street.

In addition to the two Frenchtown pieces, "Miles of Mules" incorporates more than 150 decorated, life-sized, fiberglass mules that will dot the landscape of five Pennsylvania counties.

River Mule gazes out upon Bridge Street from a flowered corner of the Hudson United Bank parking lot. Kipp's Mule stands beside the Frenchtown Inn, at the entrance to the D&R Canal State Park hiking path. The two will remain at those locations through October. Along with the other works in the Miles of Mules project, they are then scheduled to be collected and auctioned.

Both Frenchtown mules were painted by Barry Sharplin, an artist from New Zealand who is co-owner, with his wife Cleo, of Alchemy Creative Clothing. Highlighted by shimmering shades of green and blue, River Mule depicts the elements of a flowing river. The Frenchtown Business and Professional Association raised \$3,000 to buy the unpainted figure. Part of the sale proceeds will go to the River Union Stage, a newly formed, nonprofit local theater company.

FBPA President John Hindman



Staff photo by Ben Scheetz

**'MILES OF MULES'** art display in Frenchtown is admired by artist Barry Sharplin, and John Hindman, president of the Frenchtown Business and Professional Association and owner of Thistle, a downtown shop.

has voiced the hope that a local individual or business will purchase River Mule and allow it to become a permanent Bridge Street fixture.

Kipp's Mule was named after Kipp Sujet of Jutland, who died at the age of 18 in 1995. Suggesting a neolithic cave-painting, the design features mazes encompassing the images of a man with a pipe blowing bubbles. It is based on designs

Sujet created while he was hospitalized undergoing a bone-marrow transplant for leukemia. The Kipp Sujet Memorial Scholarship Fund, which sponsors the mule, will receive part of the sale proceeds.

Miles of Mules grew from a project that originated several years ago in Zurich, Switzerland. There, decorated, life-sized cows were displayed throughout the city and countryside, attracting thousands of

visitors. Similar projects have been successfully mounted throughout the world since then.

The FBPA sponsors of River Mule include Alba, Alchemy Creative Clothing, Book Garden, Brown Dog Ventures, Detail Matters, David Miller, Donna Miller, Euphoria, Lila's at the National Hotel, Louisa Melrose Gallery, Mitchell Williams Real Estate, Natural Instincts, Seasons, The Studio and Thistle.