



**SALINA  
ARTS**  
& HUMANITIES

**SMOKY  
HILL  
RIVER  
FESTIVAL**

**NEWS RELEASE**

### **RIVER FESTIVAL 2020 ADMISSION CHANGES**

(Salina, KS 08-19) Salina Arts & Humanities announces several changes for River Festival 2020.

For the first time in 10 years, the Salina City Commission recently approved a \$5 increase for advance and at-gate Festival admission. To reduce button sharing and decrease administrative and postage costs, entrance wristbands will replace buttons for all daily and weekend Festival admission, beginning May 1, 2020.

Increases in the cost of staffing, goods and services, plus a desire to modernize the Festival, are among influencing factors for the admission changes. Lost revenue from years of button sharing and a goal to bring Festival admission prices more in line with events of similar caliber, are other considerations.

Salina Arts & Humanities Executive Director Brad Anderson says, “These steps, which we are sharing well in advance, will streamline admission practices for guests and our many Festival Retailers, and will ensure sufficient income so that the Smoky Hill River Festival remains among the best of its kind for years to come.” Anderson reminds Festival fans that a \$15 weekend wristband represents an investment of just 40 cents an hour to enjoy top-notch music and art, unique foods and a full weekend of family fun.

Switching from buttons to admission wristbands has been discussed by SAH staff and commissioners for more than a decade. “In light of increasing costs and a tighter city budget, this felt like a good time to make the switch,” Anderson says. SAH conducted a survey in 2016 of more than 500 Salina and regional residents, revealing that nearly 40% of Festival admission buttons are shared each year, resulting in \$40,000 to \$80,000 of lost annual revenue. Guests also have complained about the safety and dependability of wearing pin-on buttons, which can get misplaced or injure wearers when they come unfastened. Gate volunteers and security staff have experienced frustration when they try to quickly spot Festival buttons on the many places guests wear them, as they enter the park. Such staff will be able to check for Festival wristbands more quickly, reducing delays.

Anderson’s staff has worked hard to raise private funds, increase in-kind support and address operational efficiencies. “We have saved tens of thousands of dollars over the last decade to maintain or improve the quality of the River Festival without raising prices.

### **RELEASE DATE:**

Immediate

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### **DATE SUBMITTED:**

August 27, 2019

These changes will help us move into planning for the 50th anniversary Festival in 2026, with adequate capacity to make it the best it can be.”

Despite the admission-price increase of \$5, the Smoky Hill River Festival remains a great value. Says Sylvia Rice, Visit Salina Director of the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce, “The Festival is a big draw because of its artsy ambiance, its high level of organization for vendors, performers, audience and volunteers, and the sense of community and celebration it brings to Salina.” Rice and Anderson say that Salina’s reputation as a professional and hospitable Festival host city contributes to the \$3.5 million generated each year, bringing revenue to restaurants, hotels, restaurants, gas stations and more.

Many steps are taken to keep the River Festival as affordable as possible. In 2019, private donors provided underwriting for 800 admission buttons so that economically disadvantaged families and children could attend through the Festival Families First program, in existence since 2005. Additionally, parking and shuttle rides are free during the Festival, and incoming guests can bring their own food and drink. Across the Festival’s Food Row and art show there are many affordable options. Food vendors are required to offer a non-drink menu item for \$3 or less, while a variety of exhibiting artists have items for sale for as little as \$5.

Children ages 11 and under get in free to the Festival each year, and all Artyopolis make-and-take crafts are free. To further enhance affordability, the Salina City Commission will be asked to approve the addition of a new \$10 daily-admission option to the Comprehensive Fee Schedule at an upcoming meeting, along with already approved admission-price changes. “Staff and the Festival’s 22 committees are blessed to produce an event that is well-loved and valued regionally, setting Salina apart,” says Anderson. “We are confident these leaders and others will continue to support the River Festival and the changes being made, to ensure that one of Salina’s best-known signature events continues to improve.”

**Changes for Smoky Hill River Festival 2020 include:**

1. Admission prices will adjust from \$10 in advance and \$15 at the gate to \$15 in advance and \$20 at the gate. Single-day admission wristbands will be available at select entrance gates for \$10.
2. Admission buttons will no longer be used. Comfortable, safe admission wristbands good for all four days of the Festival will be available beginning May 1 at 40 local and about 25 regional locations. Single-day wristbands will be available ONLY at the gate. The colors of the single-day wristband will change daily.
3. Festival Buttons will be available in limited numbers as a non-admission, commemorative souvenir, at the Festival information booths, for those who enjoy collecting or wearing them to show their civic pride and support of the Festival. An assessment will take place in

a year or two regarding how long to continue offering a Festival souvenir Button.

For needed accommodations, please call Amanda Morris at Salina Arts & Humanities at 785-309-5770 between 8:00 a.m. - Noon and 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. Every effort will be made to accommodate known disabilities. For material or speech access, please call at least five working days prior to the event.

*Salina Arts & Humanities, a department of the City of Salina, has served a unique role in arts advocacy and support since 1966. The Smoky Hill River Festival, Horizons Grants Program, Smoky Hill Museum, Arts Infusion Program in schools, Community Art & Design and the Friday Night Live performance series are among the programs of Salina Arts & Humanities, located at 211 W. Iron Avenue in Salina.*

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