



SMOKY HILL RIVER FESTIVAL RESCHEDULED TO LABOR DAY WEEKEND

(Salina, KS 02-21) After consultation with City staff and officials, Salina Arts & Humanities announces the rescheduling of the Smoky Hill River Festival to Thursday to Sunday, September 2-5, 2021.

Festival staff has taken this action to ensure that the energy and spirit of the River Festival can be fully celebrated this year. “In these challenging times, with utmost regard for health and safety, we felt this was the most reasonable solution,” says SAH and Festival Executive Director Brad Anderson. “We had to consider our many Festival attendees and volunteers of all ages, as well as the more than 250 artists, performers and vendors who come from outside Salina. The safety and health of these constituents is important, so we made this decision with them in mind.”

Why September? The decision came after analyzing the risks and costs of trying to stage a multi-day event in early June, when vaccination and public-health conditions may still be well in flux.

If the River Festival would have been held in early June, health concerns may have required on-site changes including: no shuttles, no Big Band Dance, a less interactive kid’s area, one-way traffic in the art show, limited Food Row seating, fewer volunteers, and reducing attendance to ensure social distancing. Since admission revenue represents 43% of funding needed to produce the Festival, holding it when many can safely attend is key to its success.

Sylvia Rice, Visit Salina Director for the Salina Area Chamber of Commerce, supports the late-summer time frame. “We are thrilled that the River Festival is a ‘go.’ Many are looking forward to its 45th anniversary and can’t wait to come,” says Rice. “Local hoteliers, restaurants and other businesses benefit in a huge way, and each will be excited to have the Festival on their calendar once again.”

What will be different by September? Festival leadership will work with City and County officials, including the Saline County Health Department and Emergency Management, to prepare a detailed safety plan. Health officials have indicated that mask wearing may still be likely by early fall, but that strict social-distancing guidelines could be lessened for outdoor events. Festival staff and committee leaders will team up to create an event filled with the excitement and anticipation

NEWS RELEASE

RELEASE DATE:

Immediate

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that defines Salina when it's time each year for the River Festival - a community celebration many know and love.

How does the Festival strengthen Salina? The Smoky Hill River Festival has a national reputation for hospitality and attention to detail.

“Holding a well-organized, responsible event three months later will allow staff, volunteers, and guests time to plan for and experience the Festival’s 45th anniversary with the excellence and energy it has demonstrated for years,” says Brad Anderson. “Amenities that Festival-goers are accustomed to, including the shuttle service, can once again be available.” The Festival generates roughly \$3.5 million on-site and around town, drawing up to 60,000 attendees from across Kansas and more than 30 states, while boosting local morale and spending.

What’s ahead? Planning for music acts, artists, kid’s activities, food vendors, and more is in full swing. Clear announcements about Festival public-health guidelines will be made prior to Monday, July 26, when weekend-admission wristbands go On Sale statewide. Festival fans will have ample time to schedule vacation days and invite their family and friends, as they look forward to enjoying themselves at the River Festival over Labor Day weekend.

To see what’s on tap for the 45th-anniversary River Festival, visit riverfestival.com or facebook.com/SHRiverFestival.

For needed accommodations, please call Amanda Morris at Salina Arts & Humanities at 785-309-5770 between 8 a.m. and 12 noon or 1 to 5 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 a meeting or event.

Salina Arts & Humanities, a department of the City of Salina, has served a unique role in arts advocacy and support since 1966. Its flagship event, the Smoky Hill River Festival, along with the Horizons Grants program, Smoky Hill Museum, Arts Infusion Program in schools, Community Art & Design, and the Creative Connections e-newsletter are among the programs of Salina Arts & Humanities, located at 211 W. Iron Avenue in downtown Salina.

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