



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**NATIONALLY RANKED SUMMER ARTS FESTIVAL
REVEALS NEW LOOK AND SITE PLAN AT 2007 EVENT
PRESENTED BY FIRST NATIONAL BANK**

The 33rd annual Omaha Summer Arts Festival, presented by First National Bank, will fill the streets along downtown Omaha's Gene Leahy Mall with three days of art, music, children's activities, food and more. Previously selected as Omaha's Best Annual Festival and one of the Top 100 Fine Arts Festivals in the country, the Festival was recently named one of 2007's Top 100 Events in North America by the American Bus Association - the only event in Nebraska to receive this honor in 2007.

Scheduled for Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 22, 23 and 24, the Festival offers an exciting weekend of fun for the whole family. General Festival hours are 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Festival-goers will discover many exciting new changes at this year's event. Three impressive 28-foot entrance arches will welcome visitors at 10th and Farnam Streets, 14th and Farnam Streets and 11th and Harney Streets. Colorful new signage will be placed throughout the Festival grounds and the layout has been changed to ease navigation and encourage strolling throughout the entire six-block event.

The Artists' Market, featuring 135 juried artists from across the U.S., has been lengthened to stretch from 10th to 14th Streets along Farnam. Mixed in along the way, visitors will discover four Omaha's ArtSeen tents offering a variety of artist demonstrations provided by local gallery artists. In addition, the Festival will introduce a new Café concept featuring the Whole Foods Market Natural Café, Hy-Vee Family Café and a special Wine & Cheese Café offering Little Black Dress wines and Maytag Cheese. To round out the atmosphere, a classical and jazz guitarist will play near the Wine & Cheese Café and a professional busker will engage crowds with his extraordinary juggling skills and comedic talents.

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“As our presenting sponsor, First National Bank has made many of the new site and program enhancements possible,” said Anne Boyle, president of Omaha Summer Arts Festival, Inc. “We truly appreciate their investment in the growth and future of the Festival.”

As another new feature, First National Bank will host a Relaxation Station in a large tent on the corner of 11th and Farnam Streets near the heart of the Artists' Market, adjacent to the Children's Fair and near the Family Entertainment Stage. Complimentary chair massages will be available as well as a cool, shaded seating area for the enjoyment and comfort of Festival guests.

“First National Bank is proud to serve as the presenting sponsor of this outstanding event,” said Rajive Johri, president and director of First National Bank of Omaha. “The Festival is a great example of what makes Omaha such a wonderful city to live in and enjoy. This year, as we celebrate 150 years of service to this great community, we want everyone to share in the celebration. Sponsoring the Summer Arts Festival is just one way for us to say ‘thank you’ to the people of Omaha for our 150 years of success.”

Artists' Market

With beautiful artwork from 135 juried artists available to browse and buy, the public will enjoy strolling the Festival's nationally ranked Artists' Market on Farnam from 10th to 14th Streets. Participating artists were selected from more than 300 applications by a jury of local and regional art professionals. They will represent 29 states from across the U.S. as well as Canada.

Artwork for purchase will include a broad range of media including two-dimensional and three-dimensional fine art and fine craft. Jewelry, sculpture, photography, painting, fiber and wood are just a few of the types of artwork buyers will have to choose from. An on-site jury will be held Friday, June 22, where a panel of local and regional artists, gallery curators and art educators will evaluate the work for selection of the 2007 Merit Award Winners. Sponsored by Omaha Steaks, each of the 13 Merit Award Winners will receive a cash award as well as a large rosette ribbon of recognition they will display from their booth for the remainder of the weekend.

Omaha's ArtSeen

Omaha's ArtSeen will offer an expansion of the Festival's tradition of providing live artist demonstrations including clay throwing, lampwork, glass bending, paper making and more. Presented in partnerships with four downtown art galleries and interspersed throughout the Artists' Market, this program will offer an informal opportunity for the public to interact face-to-face with local artists. Omaha's ArtSeen will feature a wide range of artist demonstrations provided by Omaha Clay Works, Passageway Gallery, Hot Shops Art Center and Artists Cooperative Gallery.

As an added attraction, the Hot Shops Art Center will invite the public to join ceramic artist Tim Barry in throwing clay, decorating pots and helping to create a clay village.

Concert Line-Up

The World Music Pavilion, located on 13th Street between Harney and Farnam Streets, will house the Luigi Waites Pavilion Stage and Nebraska Craft Brew Fest. Sponsored by Guinness and Little Black Dress wines, the all-ages Pavilion will offer festival-goers a convenient and fun place to get out of the sun, sit and enjoy great music. *Hours are 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Sunday.*

A full weekend of concerts showcasing a wide variety of musical genres will be presented on the Luigi Waites Pavilion Stage. The Omaha Musicians Association Jazz All Stars will open the stage at 12 p.m. on Friday followed by acoustic singer/songwriter Grant Richard and traditional Irish folk musicians the Turfmen. Headliners on Friday will include BeauSoleil at 7 p.m. and Public Property at 9 p.m. Hailed as the most esteemed Cajun group in music, Grammy®-award winning BeauSoleil will heat up the stage with their unique blend of zydeco, New Orleans jazz, Tex-Mex, country and blues. Capping off the evening, Public Property will entertain Festival crowds with reggae music infused with soul, funk, hip-hop and ska.

On Saturday, The Rain Dogs will perform an eclectic mix of old time jug band blues, boogie woogie and acoustic rock & roll. Next up, the Street Railway Company Jazz Band will perform Dixieland-style jazz followed by the jazz fusion stylings of the Gravydippers. At 5 p.m., The Waybacks, a national group that defies categorization, will showcase their well-known musical improvisational excursions performing everything from bluegrass and western swing to jug band and gypsy jazz.

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Saturday's headliners include The Eric Steckel Band at 7 p.m. and, back by popular demand, Son Venezuela, at 9 p.m. Originally from Pennsylvania, Eric's early musical influences inspired him to pick up his first Fender Stratocaster at the age of nine eventually sharing the stage with guitar legend Tommy Castro. Capping off the evening, Kansas City's ten-piece Son Venezuela will have the audience on their feet dancing to the irresistible Latin sounds of meringue, calypso, cumbia, tamborera and rumba.

The cool island sounds of Rhythm Collective will open the stage on Sunday at 11:30 a.m. followed by Omaha legend and pavilion stage namesake Luigi Waites who will perform with his six-piece combo Luigi Inc. at 1:30 p.m. Rounding out a fantastic weekend of music will be the Cajun sounds of Chubby Carrier & The Bayou Swamp Band.

Top-selling Native American music group Brule will perform on the Landmark Plaza Stage periodically throughout the weekend between 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. This award-winning band has garnered widespread recognition and a large local following for its distinctive new age sound.

Food & Libations

In addition to a full weekend of entertainment on the Luigi Waites Pavilion Stage, the World Music Pavilion will offer Smirnoff Ice, Guinness Ale and Little Black Dress wines for purchase. The Pavilion will also host the Nebraska Craft Brew Fest offering 14 different types of beer produced by six Nebraska breweries. *Alcoholic beverages will not be sold until after 4 p.m. on Friday and after 12 p.m. on Sunday.*

Immediately outside the Pavilion, the Coca Cola Taste Fest will feature a variety of cuisines presented by La Mesa Mexican Restaurant, Made 2 Grill, Papa John's Genuine Greek Foods, RoRo's Concessions, Texas Roadhouse, Wells' Blue Bunny and Valentino's. Of course, all of the traditional Festival favorites such as kettle corn, roasted almonds and shaved ice, will also be available for purchase.

The Festival's three new cafés will round out the dining options at the event. Interspersed within the Artists' Market, the HyVee Family Café will offer family-style picnic entrees, the Whole Foods Market Natural Café will feature healthy wraps and sandwiches and the Wine & Cheese Café will offer a delectable array of fresh Maytag cheese paired with Little Black Dress wines.

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Children's Fair & Young Artist Exhibition

"Explore Your Universe!" is the theme of this year's Omaha Summer Arts Festival Children's Fair presented by Target. With a new location in the heart of the Festival at Farnam and 11th Streets, the Children's Fair will offer dozens of hands-on activities and art projects for kids ages three to 10 years old. *Hours for the Children's Fair are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday.*

Children are encouraged to let their imagination and creativity take flight as they build instruments, design jewelry, decorate flower pots, create spin art, make slime and more. In all, there will be 20 activities to choose from, each sponsored by a community organization, educator or local business. Participating organizations include Youth Arts presenting sponsor Target, the Strategic Air & Space Museum, Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, the Omaha Children's Museum, El Museo Latino, Girls Inc., the Junior League, Mulhall's, Metro Community College and many others.

Children will also enjoy an exciting line-up of performances presented on the Target Family Entertainment Stage. On Saturday, Cap'n Arrrr, the funniest pirate never to sail the seven seas, will perform two sets at 12:30 and 3:30 p.m. Cap'n Arrrr, a.k.a Won Israel, learned to be a master of pantomime and physical comedy from the famous Marcel Marceau. At 1:30 and 4:30 p.m., the Lincoln-based String Beans, known as "The Wiggles of the Midwest," will entertain children and adults alike with their silly lyrics, catchy tunes and high-energy performances.

On Sunday, artist Paul Merklein's Great Big Faces will be presented at 12:30 and 2:30 p.m. Great Big Faces combines dynamic art and audience participation to create six-foot-tall faces of kids and adults using oil paints. Featured at 1:30 and 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, Laughing Matters will perform "juggling, mime, magic and other nonsense." A husband and wife team based in Kansas City, Laughing Matters has performed across the United States and around the world.

Admission to the Children's Fair, all of the stage entertainment and several of the activities are free. Tickets for the remaining hands-on crafts and other activities are 50 cents each with most activities costing from one to four tickets.

The Festival's 12th annual Young Artist Exhibition will take place in the Michael Phipps Gallery on the main floor of the downtown W. Dale Clark Library. More than 300 pieces of artwork created by students in grades six through 12 will be displayed. Senior scholarships, recognition awards, art supplies and prizes will be presented at a special Young Artist Exhibition Recognition Brunch on Saturday, June 23rd.

Sponsor Recognition and More Information

The 33rd Annual Omaha Summer Arts Festival presented by First National Bank is sponsored by Target, Qwest and KETV Channel 7. Additional supporters of the Festival include Douglas County Board of Commissioners, 1110 KFAB, KGOR 99.9 FM, The Brew 96.1 and KAT 103, RDG Planning & Design, Hy-Vee Food Stores, Guinness, Smirnoff Ice, Nebraska Wine & Spirits, Omaha Steaks, The Coca-Cola Bottling Company of the Midlands, Burlington Capital Group, Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Lottery, Omaha Public Power District, Peter Kiewit Sons' Inc., Prudential Ambassador, Creighton Medical Associates, CBSHOME Real Estate, Whole Foods Market Omaha, Little Black Dress Wines, Planet Earth Distilled Drinking Water, *The Reader*, The Mammel Foundation, It's A Wonderful World Childcare Centers and Oriental Trading Company. The Festival is professionally managed by Vic Gutman & Associates.

The official Omaha Summer Arts Festival program will appear as a pull-out supplement to the June 14th edition of *The Reader* distributed in restaurants and retail locations throughout Omaha-Council Bluffs and Lincoln. The Festival will also be featured in a four-page special section printed as part of the *Omaha World-Herald's* Go Mag on Thursday, June 21st. For additional information on the Festival, including a variety of sidebar stories, downloadable images and complete stage schedules, please visit www.SummerArts.org.

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