



# Ten years of tones: Mississippi Earthtones Festival celebrates decade benchmark

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
September 18 2016 9:12 AM

**ALTON** - Two entire city blocks were added to this year's **Mississippi Earthtones Festival**, which is celebrating its 10th year in Alton.

**Broadway** was closed from **Alton Street** to **Henry** Saturday so six bands and more than 65 vendors could join the community in celebration of the **Mississippi River**. The event is hosted by **Alton Main Street** and the **Sierra Club** with the help of several area sponsors. This year, a river cleanup with more than 150 volunteers departed in boats to clean trash and large chunks of foam from the water. The festival itself kicked off with a proclamation from **Alton Mayor Brant Walker**, which christened the rest of the day **Mississippi Earthtones Day** in Alton.

"We are so thrilled the crowd is so huge so early," **Alton Main Street Executive Director Sara McGibany** said early Saturday afternoon. "Usually, we don't have this many people until **Jake's Leg** is about to come on."



Jake's Leg, a band reminiscent of jam bands such as the **Grateful Dead** headlined the event for the second year in a row, this year performing on a new main stage near **Langdon Street**. Other bands playing the main stage included American bottoms rock band **Hideous Gentlemen** and bluegrass band **River Bend**. A secondary stage, the **Confluence Stage**, in front of **Mineral Springs Mall** hosted acoustic band, **The House Band**, **Celia's Sing-a-Long Dance Party** and gypsy folk act, **Erin Jo Paddlefoot**.

Besides bands, festival goers could enjoy a collection of vending artists selling everything from handbags and t-shirts to carved items and paintings. Local businesses, such as **Old Bakery Beer Company** and **Illinois American Water** also had booths serving refreshments to the community.

"We have three of our beers in cans," Old Bakery Beer bartender **Rory Morse** said. "We also brought some sandwiches for people to enjoy. We're looking forward to a great crowd. The weather is really nice."

This year's festival also featured several interactive pieces. A mini-park was created for kids with the help of the **Heartland Conservancy**. Sidewalk chalk mandalas were also drawn by local artists on the street, and an interactive textile art piece was created on some chain link fencing by fifth-grade art students. One of those students' mothers was **Rachel Leppin**, who assisted the children in the arts.



"I came out with my daughter and her friends, and helped out a bit, but this was mostly their doing," she said.

The biggest addition to the celebration of a decade of Earthtones was diversity, said **Alton Main Street Board President Debby Edelman.**

"It's not only the quantity of the vendors this year, but it's also the quality and the diversity of the vendors," she said.

Before Jake's Leg took the stage, festival goers were introduced to a form of "color run" in which colored corn starch balls were thrown at people in order to make their own sort of tie-dye.

"We are giving people plain white shirts to cover their clothes if they don't want to get them all covered in colors," McGibany said.



