



11th Annual Mississippi Earthtones Festival

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ALTON - The Mississippi Earthtones Festival, co-organized by Alton Main Street and the Sierra Club, is a celebration of our river through art, music, and conservation. The 3rd Saturday in September has been proclaimed as “Mississippi Earthtones Festival Day” in the City of Alton, and the 11th Annual event falls on September 16th, promising to

attract thousands of people to Broadway. The street will be closed to traffic between Alton Street and Henry Street from Noon until 10:00 p.m.



This year's theme is "pollinators", and local artists will fill the grounds with beauty and creativity in this motif, which will visually enhance the festival for visitors through interactive art experiences.

Thanks to a grant from Illinois American Water, five artists have been commissioned to build large art installations throughout the grounds. The Riverbend Yarn Bombers are knitting & crocheting a colorful garden full of flowers and bugs that will be displayed on the pedestrian bridge, which leads to 500 parking spots for attendees. Artist Sun Smith-Foret will be exhibiting textile art panels from her "Riverwork Project" that were created with youth from the Art of Universal Language program.

Dozens of local artisans will offer their nature-inspired, hand-made, and environmentally-friendly wares. You'll find wearable art such as tie dyes, knit clothing, crocheted accessories, and upcycled jewelry.

A variety of handcrafted body care products will be available, such as plant-based and goat milk soaps and organic essential oils. You'll also find unique home décor, nature themed artwork and photography. Other functional handmade items available for purchase include hand turned wooden bowls and vessels, hardwood kitchen utensils and bird houses. At 12:30, the By Design School of Fashion will present a Recycled Fashion Show; designers are still welcome to submit garments made from materials that would have otherwise ended up in the landfill or recycling facility.

Again this year, guests will enjoy watching street artists draw large colorful mandalas and other works of art with chalk during the event. Anyone interested in learning the art of hoop dancing is welcome to attend two free workshops offered by the Hoop Factory at 1:30 and 4:00. Right before the headlining band takes the stage at 7:00, guests will enjoy "Colorfest" where anyone interested in being turned into a human tie-dye canvas can purchase packets of brightly-colored corn starch to toss into the air in a designated area. Dress appropriately, or grab a complimentary white t-shirt that will be distributed on-site.

"At the MEF, local artists are given the opportunity to let their creativity run wild, and we showcase our region's environmental organizations as well as local businesses that are working to help "green" residents' lives," said Sara McGibany, Executive Director of Alton Main Street. "We encourage the community to join us for this momentous occasion and spend the day exploring Broadway."

There will be several agencies on hand to teach consumers how to incorporate more sustainable practices into their daily routines, along with companies featuring Earth-

friendly products and services. “Festival-goers will have many chances to have a positive effect on the environment that day,” said Christine Favilla, Three Rivers Project Coordinator for the Sierra Club. “They can get easy tips on things such as winterizing their homes and conserving water, or bring along the following materials to be recycled: plastic plant pots, cell phones, eyeglasses, hearing aids, old home & garden tools and clean plastic food containers to be made into percussion instruments for music-making at the event.”

A variety of fun and educational activities are planned for families. You check out a daystar solar scope at The Nature Institute booth, paint with plants at the Community Cultivators booth, and learn about macroinvertebrates as biological indicators of water pollution with the National Great Rivers Research & Education Center. The Sierra Club will offer an instrument making booth using natural or re-used materials. The Illinois Department of Natural Resources will offer their interactive Wildlife Trailer and felt fishing game for kids.

The Community Supported Garden at LaVista will offer information on supporting local sustainable agriculture; the Alton Museum of History & Art will present on river history and folk art from our area, the Better Building Institute will teach about energy efficiency and zero-energy home building. The McCully Heritage Project & Center for American Archaeology will highlight programs in Kampsville & share info about archaeology in the Illinois River Valley.

Other special features include a bicycle course designed by Heartlands Conservancy, where kids will learn the rules of the road and citizens will engage in discussion about the City’s bicycle & pedestrian plan currently in the works. Rogue Theater will be presenting a street theater area with a performance that dovetails with the environmental message of the festival. At 4:00, three local champions for the environment will be presented with the Confluence Conservation Leadership Award.

Many animal experts will be on-hand at MEF for questions and answers. Learn about and visit with rehabilitated creatures at the Treehouse Wildlife Center booth, and get up close and personal with a bald eagle and a barred owl with the World Bird Sanctuary.

Wind-powered music will fill the air from two stages throughout the day. The entertainment line-up on the Main Stage will feature The Mellow D's performing funky jam rock from 2:00-4:00, Hideous Gentlemen playing American Bottom Rock from 4:30-6:30, a drum circle from 6:30-7:00, and from 7:00-10:00 p.m. Jake's Leg will perform their interpretation of the music of the Grateful Dead, as they have been doing in the St. Louis region for over 35 years. The Confluence Stage will feature Bob & Me

performing Jazz from Noon–1:30 p.m., Foraker Harbison performing bluesy dancing tunes from 2:00-4:00, Amalghemy creating Earth rhythms from 4:00-4:30, and Ahna Schoenhoff, a rhythmic Blues Singer-Songwriter performs from 4:30-6:30.

Be sure to come hungry because there will be a great selection of local food & beverages on site from The Old Bakery Beer Company who will be serving food as well as craft beer and beer slushies, Bluff City Grill serving pulled pork and chicken sandwiches along with a variety of loaded nachos and domestic beers, Indian Sunshine Cuisine offering Indian, Punjabi and Bulgarian cuisine with great vegetarian options, Team Honduras serving grilled corn on the cob, walking tacos and sliced watermelon, Kona Ice – a shaved ice truck where you pour your own flavors, Bubba Grump Smoked Pretzels, and a festival wouldn't be complete without a bag of Poputopia gourmet flavored popcorn or Hot Poppin' Kettle Corn!

Broadway businesses are preparing to roll out the red carpet for the crowd, and a number of shops will have displays and merchandise on the sidewalk. There is ample parking for festival attendees in the Farmers' & Artisans' Market parking lot, located at 501 Landmarks Blvd.; guests can simply walk across the pedestrian bridge directly to the event. Handicapped parking is available at the Crown Vision Center corporate office, located at the southwest corner of Broadway and Alton Streets, between Mineral Springs Mall & Wilson's Antiques.

Volunteers are needed at the festival grounds, and anyone who pitches in will receive a free festival t-shirt. Sign up on the Events page of www.DowntownAlton.com. For the first time, the MEF River Clean Up will take place the following Saturday, Sept. 23rd. instead of the morning of the festival. Boats will ferry volunteers to clean up riverbanks and islands from 9 a.m.-12 p.m., and pre-registration is required to reserve your seat. Volunteers can sign up in person at the festival or register online. 27.2 tons of trash have been removed from the Mississippi River during MEF clean-ups to date, with more than 20,000 volunteer hours contributed so far. To depart for the cleanup, volunteers will cross the Clark Bridge into Missouri, take a left at the first gas station and follow the signs far down the road below the Melvin Price Lock and Dam.

This festival is held annually on the 3rd Saturday in September, as part of the State of Illinois' "It's Our River Day" initiative to celebrate Illinois watersheds through education, recreation and conservation. Alton's free community river celebration would not be possible without the generosity of its sponsors. Alton Main Street and the Sierra Club express their sincere appreciation to the following local businesses and organizations for supporting the event: The Telegraph, Riverbender.com, WBGZ Radio, AdVantage News, Simmons Hanly Conroy, Alton Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau, Environmental Protection Agency, Madison County Planning & Development, Ardent Mills, Alton Memorial Hospital, Alton Materials, It's Raining Zen, IL Natural

History Survey Great Rivers Field Station, Bluff City Grill, The Old Bakery Beer Co., Lewis & Clark Community College, Mississippi Mud Pottery and Heartlands Conservancy.

To register for any of these activities, check out the festival map, read the festival's "Green Guidelines" or sign up to volunteer please visit www.DowntownAlton.com. To stay up-to-date on announcements, please visit: www.facebook.com/EarthtonesFestival.