



# Celebrate life on the river at the 12th 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday in September has been proclaimed as “Mississippi Earthtones Festival Day” in the City of Alton, and the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual event falls on September 15<sup>th</sup>, promising to attract thousands of people to Broadway. The street will be closed to traffic between Easton Street and Langdon Street from Noon until 10:00 p.m.

“At the MEF, 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 the wide variety of locally-owned businesses on Broadway.”

This year’s theme is “Positive Energy – Go With the Current”, and local artists will fill the grounds with beauty and creativity, while enhancing the festival for visitors through interactive art experiences. Artists have been commissioned to build large art installations throughout the grounds, and the Riverbend Yarn Bombers are knitting & crocheting a colorful waterfall. Chalk artists will decorate the street with large colorful mandalas.

Dozens of local artisans and upcyclers will offer their nature-inspired, hand-made, and environmentally-friendly wares. There will be a huge selection of local food & beverages on site, and several agencies will be teaching consumers how to incorporate more sustainable practices into their daily lives.

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](http://www.DowntownAlton.com). Volunteers can also participate in the MEF River Clean Up, which will take place the following Saturday, Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup>. Boats will ferry volunteers to clean up riverbanks and

islands from 9am-12pm, and pre-registration is required to reserve your seat. Volunteers can sign up in person at the festival or register online. Approximately 32 tons of trash has been removed from the Mississippi River during MEF clean-ups to date, with more than 20,000 volunteer hours contributed so far.

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. At 4:00, two local champions for the environment will be presented with the Confluence Conservation Leadership Award. Alley Ringhausen, Director of Great Rivers Land Trust and Andrew Dobson, local freelance photographer. Awarded each year since 2007, The Mississippi Earthtones Festival Committee recognizes local residents who make significant contributions in environmental conservation in the Riverbend region. The 2018 recipients have worked tirelessly to advocate, educate and inspire action in areas of environmental education, sustainability, and land conservation.

There will be several agencies on hand to teach consumers how to incorporate more sustainable practices into their daily lives, along with companies featuring Earth-friendly products and services. “This year’s event has a strong sustainable energy education and positive energy art components,” says Christine Favilla, Three Rivers Project Co-Coordinator for Alton’s Sierra Club. “We are very involved with the Solarize Metro East Program, a community-wide residential and commercial discount program offering distributed solar energy arrays that rolled out in April 2016. We can’t wait to share the results of this endeavor as well as educating residents, businesses, farms, and non-profits of the state and federal incentives and the base discount that further reduce the cost of going solar and will end September 30, 2018.”

A variety of fun and educational activities are planned for families from Noon until 6:00 p.m. Check out a daystar solar scope at The Nature Institute booth, and learn about the ecology of the river with the Illinois Natural History Survey’s Great Rivers Field Station. The Sierra Club will offer a solar cooker contest, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources will offer their interactive Wildlife Trailer and felt fishing game for kids. Eckert’s Country Store and Farms will be giving away complimentary fresh local apples, and will have activities, crafts, entertainment and freebies from their “Pick Kindness” program for kids, guests of all ages will love the themed art activity with Jacoby Arts Center. Native animal experts will be on-hand for questions and answers; learn about and visit with rehabilitated creatures at the Treehouse Wildlife Center booth, and a festival wouldn’t be complete without getting your face painted.

The Community Supported Garden at LaVista will offer sustainable produce; and you can learn about sustainable agriculture from our local organic garden supplier, Golden Road Organics. Learn how to make reusable bags from upcycled t-shirts at the Bring

Your Own Glen-Ed booth. 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, zero-energy home building, and energy audits. Learn about upcoming policy matters with the Illinois Environmental Council, and learn about green jobs at the SIUE Environmental Resources Training Center booth.

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 plant-based soap and handcrafted body care products will be available and you'll also find unique home décor, nature themed artwork and photography. Other functional handmade items available for purchase include native wildflowers and prairie grasses, and pallet furniture.

Other special features include the Principia College Solar Car, a student run project that designs, builds, and races solar powered vehicles all over the world. You can check out a new electric-powered Tesla and play games at the Riverbender.com Community Center exhibit, and from Noon to 2pm The St. Louis Science Center will teach families about UV rays and energy from the sun. Enjoy a fun Murder Mystery Dinner activity with Sly Hedgehog Productions, and visit the solar cell phone charging station with EFS Energy.

Wind-powered music will fill the air from two stages throughout the day. The entertainment line-up on the Main Stage will feature Big George Jr. & the NGK Band performing Blues and 60s & 70s dance tunes from 2:00-4:00, singer-songwriters Rogers and Neinhaus performing their soaring harmonies 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 Nancy Lippincott performing Celtic & Appalachian Songs from 1:00-2:30 p.m., Raw Earth Urban playing Tribal Fusion percussion and World Jazz from 4:00-6:00, and there will also be guided group meditation sessions offered throughout the day.

Come hungry because there will be a great selection of local food & beverages on site. The Old Bakery Beer Company will be serving Sweet Potato & Black Bean Tacos and Smoked Chicken Tacos

as well as organic craft beer, beer slushies and Eckert's Apple Cider Rum Punch. The Brown Bag Bistro will have a hot dog stand and a beer trailer, Gentelin's on Broadway will offer organic wines and other beverages along with gourmet street burritos, Indian Sunshine Cuisine will offer Indian, Punjabi and Bulgarian cuisine with great vegetarian and vegan options. Germania Brew Haus will be serving coffee and tea, and Melvey's Place will have a beer booth. Sammi's Sandwiches is serving tenderloin sliders with a

few different choices of sauce, Team Honduras will offer walking tacos and caramel apples, and festival-goers can pick up Bubba Grump Smoked Pretzels, high protein Cahokia Rice which is sustainably grown in Southern Illinois, and local honey from Godfrey.

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 along with open houses indoors. 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.

This festival is held annually 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: Simmons Hanly Conroy, It's Raining Zen, Eckert's Country Store and Farms, Imperial Manufacturing, BJC / Alton Memorial Hospital, CNB Bank & Trust, Renewal by Andersen, Alton Regional CVB, Alton Materials, Illinois Natural History Survey Great Rivers Field Station, The Old Bakery Beer Co., Madison County Planning & Development, Solarize Metro East, The Telegraph, Riverbender.com, WBGZ Radio and AdVantage.

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](http://www.DowntownAlton.com). To stay up-to-date on announcements, please visit: [www.facebook.com/EarthtonesFestival](https://www.facebook.com/EarthtonesFestival).