



Celebrate Life On The River At The 15th Annual Mississippi Earthtones Festival

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ALTON - The Mississippi Earthtones Festival, presented by Alton Main Street and the Sierra Club, is a celebration of our river through art, music, and conservation. The 15th Annual event falls on September 18th and will be held on Broadway, which 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 “Metamorphosis”, and local artists have been commissioned to build large installations that will enhance the festival through interactive art experiences. The Riverbend Yarn Bombers are knitting & crocheting a colorful river full of creatures that morph, and chalk artists will decorate the street with large colorful mandalas. The Kooliverse will present eye-opening artworks of wonder and intrigue.

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 offers strong education components that are working towards a sustainable future,” says Christine Favilla, Three Rivers Project Co-Coordinator for Alton’s Sierra Club. “The Sierra Club just celebrated its 129th Birthday in the United States, and Alton has had an active group, The Piasa Palisades Group, for 48 years!”



A variety of fun and educational activities are planned for families from Noon until 6:00 p.m. Kids can make butterfly puddles to go and caterpillar-to-butterfly crafts plus pick up information on pollinators and free butterfly weed seeds at the Sierra Club booth. Native animal experts will be on-hand for questions and answers; check out live fish from the Mississippi River at the Illinois Natural History Survey's Great Rivers Field Station booth, and visit with rehabilitated creatures at the Treehouse Wildlife Center booth.

The Alton Museum of History & Art will present information on area fossils, rowboats, shell button techniques, and demo an early electric washing machine to teach about water usage history. The Better Building Institute will teach about energy efficiency, zero-energy home building, and energy audits. Grow Solar Metro East will share information about a program for homeowners to pool their buying power for significant discounts on solar installation and provide "Get Current" coloring books for kids.

Heartlands Conservancy will provide information on the Portage de Sioux watershed plan and offer a watershed demonstration table for kids. Visit the National Great Rivers Research & Education Center booth to learn about big river research, and you can up-cycle a previous Water Festival t-shirt into new usable items such as potholders and tote bags.

Park rangers from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Rivers Project and volunteers from the National Great Rivers Museum will discuss environmental stewardship and navigation along the Mississippi River and share educational and outreach programming opportunities that encourage our community to engage with their public lands - they will also be selling National Park Passes!

The Open Space Council will provide educational information on conserving and sustaining land, water, and other natural resources throughout the St. Louis Region. The Nature Institute will provide information on how planting native and removing invasive species benefits the Mississippi River ecosystem. Madison County Building & Zoning will provide festival-goers with supplies to clean up litter in their communities. Bluff City Outdoors will provide information about their products and services for fishing enthusiasts.

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 and crocheted items, leatherwork, handmade pet accessories, and upcycled jewelry. A variety of handmade all-natural soap and handcrafted body care products will be available, and you'll also find unique home décor, nature-themed artwork, photography,

and woodworking items. Gardeners will enjoy a native plant sale! Make sure to get a henna temporary tattoo or an airbrushed temporary tattoo while you're there.

Wind-powered music will fill the air throughout the day. The entertainment line-up on the Main Stage will feature: Sounds of Syla (Alternative R&B) from Noon-2:00, a drum circle with Raw Earth from 2:00-2:30, Red White & Floyd (Pink Floyd Tribute) from 2:30-4:30, Non-Stop Reggae from 4:45-6:45, and Jake's Leg (Grateful Dead Tribute) from 7:00-10:00. Stick around for our official after-party at The Conservatory featuring the Poor Dirty Astronauts from 8:00-midnight.

The Jacoby Arts Center has lined up an amazing day of performances for our second stage, featuring Grab Bag: Improv based performance by musicians, poets, and movers from Noon – 1:00 p.m., music by Scott Brady from 1:00-1:30, The Worn Collective will present a Sustainable Fashion Show from 1:30-2:30 plus a Thrift Village during the entire event where you can shop for gently-worn items to encourage thrifting over fast fashion to help reduce the negative effects of the textile industry on our environment. INTERWOVEN Dance Performances will take place from 2:30-3:00, Raw Earth will perform Urban Tribal Fusion and World Jazz music from 3:00-5:00, and from 5:00-6:00 enjoy live art and music meditation by Jules Fair & Nick Goebel.



At 4:30 on the Main Stage, two local champions for the environment will be presented with the Confluence Conservation Leadership Award: Allison Rhanor, Natural Resources Specialist and Museum Director for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Megan Cosgriff, Resource Conservationist for the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District. Awarded each year since 2007, the MEF committee recognizes local residents who have made significant contributions in environmental conservation in the Riverbend region. The 2021 recipients have worked tirelessly to advocate, educate and inspire action in areas of environmental education, sustainability, and land conservation.

Come hungry because there will be a great selection of local food & beverages on-site from The Old Bakery Beer Company, The Brown Bag Bistro, Gentelin's on Broadway, Big Boys Q and Southern Soul Food, The Rivers Vedge, Melvey's Place, Team Honduras, Poputopia, CJ's Juicery, Maeva's Coffee, The Flavored Pickle Bar, and Bubba Grump Smoked Pretzels.

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.

Volunteers are needed on September 18th at the festival grounds, and anyone who pitches in will receive a free festival t-shirt. Volunteers can also participate in the MEF River Clean Up, which will take place the following Saturday, Sept. 25th. Boats will ferry volunteers to clean up riverbanks and islands from 9 am-12 pm, and pre-registration is required to reserve your seat. Approximately 45 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. Volunteers can register online for both options at www.DowntownAlton.com/Events.

This festival is held annually on the third 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: Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau, City of Alton, Simmons Hanly Conroy, It's Raining Zen, Lewis & Clark Community College Sustainability Department, Cope Plastics, The Old Bakery Beer Company, Argosy Casino, Chiro One, Madison County Planning & Development, Piasa Body Art, Poputopia, Jacoby Arts Center, Illinois Natural History Survey - Great Rivers Field

Station, Excel Home Solar, Illinois American Water, Kooliverse, Village of Godfrey, Republic Services, AltonWorks, Party on Broadway, 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. To stay up-to-date on announcements, please visit www.facebook.com/EarthtonesFestival.