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OMAHA SUMMER ARTS FESTIVAL SAYS “FAREWELL” AFTER 50 YEARS
2024 Marks the End of the Annual Celebration of Art and Community

(OMAHA, Neb.) May 28, 2024 – After 50 years, the Omaha Summer Arts Festival (OSAF) is coming to a close following this year’s event June 7-9.

The Festival’s Board of Directors made the difficult decision to end the event, weighing factors such as industry-wide cost increases to produce the Festival and fundraising challenges over the last few years. As OSAF’s budget has grown, so has the difficulty of raising the funds to cover all of the increasing costs. Continuing the event in light of these issues would mean cutting programming from the Festival, something OSAF’s Board of Directors did not want to do.

“While it was a difficult decision, it is ultimately a good time for the Festival to end, as we observe our 50th anniversary,” said Molly Hartford, President of the OSAF Board of Directors. “The Omaha Summer Arts Festival, as a whole, is truly greater than the sum of its parts – it wouldn’t be the same event or have the same impact on the community if certain elements were missing from the event.”

Over the years, the Festival has served its mission by remaining a free public event that offered attendees a chance to listen to amazing local, national, and international musicians, participate in free youth activities, and enjoy visual arts showcases. Throughout the years, these visual arts showcases included the Artist Market, the annual Young Artist Exhibition, and gallery tours, along with public art installations like the Mural Cube installations and the Wind and Water sculptures in the Gene Leahy Mall.

“I never could have envisioned the Festival I started in 1975 growing and evolving into the Festival we’re putting on next week,” said Vic Gutman, the Omaha Summer Arts Festival’s Founder and Executive Director. “We’re so thankful for the sponsors, artists, volunteers, partner organizations, and, of course, the greater Omaha community for supporting us over the last 50 years.”

Established in 1975 to activate a declining downtown, the Omaha Summer Arts Festival has evolved from a modest festival to a grand celebration of the arts and community. As the Festival has grown, engaging and showcasing local and national artists continued to be the centerpiece of the event. Over the past five decades, the Omaha Summer Arts Festival has:

- Made its home in five different neighborhoods throughout downtown and midtown Omaha: the Old Market, the Civic Center and Hall of Justice, on Farnam Street along the Gene Leahy Mall, near Charles Schwab Stadium at 13th & Mike Fahey, and most recently in Aksarben Village;
- Kickstarted the development of local institutions like the Omaha Children’s Museum, the concept of which originated from the Festival’s Children’s Fair committee;

- Encouraged the next generation of artists through the annual Young Artist Exhibition and the Art Collectors in Training program;
- Created hybrid programming for two years during the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure Omaha families could still engage with artists, both local and national;
- Highlighted the local performing arts community while also bringing impressive regional and national acts such as Maynard Ferguson, Blind Boys of Alabama, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, Omaha Symphony, and Ballet Omaha;

These highlights only scratch the surface of the Omaha Summer Arts Festival's indelible impact on the Omaha community.

"This is a wonderful opportunity for us to end on a high note and make this year's event a celebration," said Gutman. "I can't wait to see everyone in Aksarben Village enjoying all the incredible art and the Festival's other programming for one final time."

The 50th annual Omaha Summer Arts Festival will take place Friday, June 7th to Sunday, June 9th in Aksarben Village. With over 130 artists showcasing art in 14 different media, there's something for every taste and budget. In addition to the Artists' Market, the Festival features live entertainment on two stages, local food vendors, a Children's Fair on Saturday and Sunday, a Young Artist Exhibition, and more. Admission is free, and Aksarben Village has plenty of free garage parking available. For more information, visit www.summerarts.org and follow the Festival on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

The Festival is presented by FNBO, and sponsored by Douglas County, The Sherwood Foundation, Kiewit, Noddle Companies, NMC and CAT Rentals, HDR Inc., Nebraska Medicine, and Aksarben Village, with media partners KETV Channel 7 and Sweet 98.5. OSAF has been professionally managed by VGA since its inception in 1975.