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University Park event brings art, food, music to Grace Park

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By Kathleen Folkert

DOWNTOWN AKRON — There's something for everyone at the University Park Arts Fair & Food Fest, organizers said.

This is the sixth year for the event, which will bring more than 100 local and regional artists, several food vendors, musical entertainment and family activities to Grace Park Aug. 13 from 10 to 6 p.m.

"We have added some components to it that draw in more of the local community and showcase the local community," said Beth Houseman, senior director of communication and community relations for the University Park Alliance (UPA).

She added the event has changed in its six years.

"It's definitely grown in terms of the number of artists showcased," she said. "This year we have six tents of artists and some individual artists in tents of their own."

Houseman said artists participating will have offerings for sale from "every media you can think of," such as painting, sculpture, jewelry and photography.

Many community organizations also will feature art activities for children as well as adults. And artists Leandra Drumm and Daniel Coffield will help participants create lanterns out of willows and papier-mâché that will be used for UPA's Light-UP! Lantern Festival Oct. 8.

More emphasis is being placed on food this year, with several vendors from the University Park neighborhood or nearby scheduled to be onsite with their offerings. Mick & Shirley's Catering and Café will be on hand with soul food, while Ms. Julie's Kitchen will feature its locally sourced vegan specialties. Taste of Bangkok, EuroGyro and the Stew Pot Kitchen also will be at the fair, as well as Arnold's Candies, which features an array of retro sweets.

Music will be in the air all day, Houseman said.

"We really tried to offer a variety where there's something for everyone," she said.

The Four Corners Jazz Quartet will start off the day at 10 a.m. with its jazz standards, followed by the folky pop of Low Watt Radio at 11:45 a.m., the Open Door Gospel Choir at 1:30 p.m., The University of Akron (UA) Steel Drum Band at 3 p.m. and gypsy jazz trio Moustache Yourself at 4:30 p.m.

Costumed mascots also will appear, as well as a stilt walker and balloon and origami artists.

Sports also will be part of the day, with Gamesnake officials on hand to demonstrate the game of futsal, a version of soccer with five players on each team. Also, the Summit Cycling Center Bicycle Co-op will have refurbished bicycles for sale.

UPA is a nonprofit community development corporation dedicated to the revitalization of University Park, a 50-block area surrounding the UA campus. Houseman said the arts fair is one way UPA is helping to showcase the community.



The University Park Arts Fair & Food Fest will take place at Grace Park Aug. 13 from 10 to 6 p.m.

Photo courtesy of University Park Alliance

“It gives us an opportunity to bring people in to visit the neighborhood and this beautiful historical park that is Grace Park,” she said. “It’s also a chance to showcase the cultural assets of the neighborhood.” Grace Park is located at the corner of Perkins and Prospect streets. Admission and parking are free. For more information, go to www.universityparkartsfair.org or call 330-777-2070.