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Annual Festival Brings African Culture to Portsmouth

Featuring live performances by national artists The Stylistics, The Delfonics & The Manhattans

PORTSMOUTH, VA – The City of Portsmouth is proud to host the [27th Annual Umoja Festival](#) at the Portsmouth Pavilion and Festival Park Memorial Day weekend, May 26 – 28. The free festival will kick off Friday evening with a drum call and ceremonial procession. Afterwards, as dictated by African tradition, the event will be blessed by elder members of the Portsmouth community. Starting at 6:15pm on Friday, music will fill the night air featuring Stan Howard and the Tidewater Drive Band.

The free live music will continue on Saturday starting at noon. Visitors will also be able to step back in history by taking a Heritage Tour - The Emanuel A.M.E. Church was a pivotal stop on the Underground Railroad. Take a guided tour to learn the stories of those who escaped to freedom. Tours are free and run at noon and 2pm. The Children's Corner will come alive from noon to 5pm with activities for even the youngest family members, including face painting, bounce houses, games, arts and crafts, and Gamerbus. New this year are the African Drum Making and African Mask Making workshops which are produced through Young Audiences of Virginia. They will be held in the Children's Corner, starting at the top of every hour from 12-5 on Saturday and 2-5 on Sunday. Each workshop lasts between 45 and 50 minutes.

On Saturday night The Stylistics, The Delfonics, and The Manhattans will take the Portsmouth Pavilion stage. While the rest of the weekend's events are free, the concert on Saturday night is not and requires ticket purchase.

The excitement peaks when the festival swings into its third and final day. Spirits will soar on "Unity Sunday" as Hope Askew takes the stage at 2:00 pm. Anthony Edwards, Tamyya, Jo'sef Haynes & United, Titus Jackson, and Anthony Turner will raise hands and voices to the Lord. Children's activities will resume in the afternoon and visitors will once again be able to take a Heritage Tour of the past, this time to the Portsmouth Community Colored Library Museum, located off site. In the evening national gospel recording artists the Rance Allen Group will close out the festival.



For the duration of the festival, the event grounds will be decorated to look like Portsmouth's sister city of Eldoret, Kenya. Visitors will be immersed into the sights and sounds of Africa as they stroll through the marketplace offering an array of traditional African wares including sculptures, paintings, prints, baskets, jewelry and other handcrafted items. Food vendors will also be on sight to offer mouthwatering selections for purchase.

The annual Umoja Festival, put on by the City of Portsmouth, brings the African experience to its citizens. Umoja is Kiswahili word that means "unity" and is the first principle of the African-American holiday of Kwanza. For more information about the festival, including how to purchase tickets for Saturday night's concert, visit UmojaFestPortsmouth.com

About the City of Portsmouth, Virginia

The City of Portsmouth, Virginia is the geographical center of Hampton Roads, located in the southeastern corner of Virginia. Over 250 years old, the city is a true historical gem with stories and architecture dating back to the American Revolution and earlier. For more information call 757-393-8000 or visit PortsmouthVA.gov

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