



For Immediate Release

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Portsmouth Hosts 29th Annual Umoja Festival Festival Heritage Tours Offers Glimpse of Truxtun Historic District

(PORTSMOUTH, VA – May 20, 2019) – Twenty nine years ago, in a city hall conference room, in the historic port city of Portsmouth, an idea was born – a concept was discussed and visualized, and after months of planning, a very special event was born – the Umoja African-American Heritage Festival. The 29th Annual Umoja Festival will be held May 24-26, at Festival Park, 16 Crawford Circle.

The Umoja Festival remains unique among regional heritage festivals in that it followed some ancient African customs. Customs such as using African drummers to communicate news and a call to action for the town's folk to join the processional were implemented. Additionally, before one dish is served, festival officials must quietly seek permission from the elders to proceed with the activities in the opening ceremony. Serving as chief elders for this year's event are Sandra Exum and Darrie Brown. In the tradition of ancient African culture and connecting with our elders – the libation is also a part of the Umoja Festival. City officials including Mayor John L. Rowe, Jr., City Manager L. Pettis Patton and Rev. Milton R. Blount, pastor of Mount Olivet Baptist Church will serve as festival officiants for the opening ceremony.



Chief elders Darrie Brown and Sandra Exum

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During this year's Umoja Festival Heritage Tours, guests will have the opportunity to tour historic Truxtun, the first federally-sponsored housing development for black shipyard workers and their families. Built between 1918 and 1920, Truxtun observes its centennial anniversary in May.

Also featured on the heritage tours will be a presentation titled, *Come Freedom, Come* by actress Valerie Davis, who brings to life the story of a slave named Martha Ann Fields. Actor Nathan Richards returns this year in his portrayal of abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The festival participants can immerse themselves in African and African-American culture including a wide variety of concerts all free; food from around the world, handcrafted goods, art and other distinctive treasures in the marketplace.

For more information on the 29th Annual Umoja Festival, visit www.umojafestportsmouth.com. All concerts are free and open to the public.

29th Annual Umoja Festival Entertainment Lineup

Friday, May 24, 2019

United Souls – 6:15 p.m.

Plunky & Oneness – 8 p.m.

Kustom Made Band – 9:45 p.m.

Saturday, May 25, 2019

Michael Clark Band – 2 p.m.

Diva's of Funk & Soul – 3:15 p.m.

Absolute Fire Band – 4:30 p.m.

Fuzz Band – 5:45 p.m.

RaJazz – 7:15 p.m.

Dazz Band – 9 p.m.

Sunday, May 26 Gospel Day

Jo'sef Haynes & Unified – 2 p.m.

Brian Hill and Provenance – 2:45 p.m.

Patrick Riddick – 3:30 p.m.

Kam Blue and Second Calvary Baptist Church Choir—4:30 p.m.

Earl Bynum & The Mount Unity Choir – 5:15 p.m.

John Foxx & Fellowship – 6 p.m.

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