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YWCA, Wheeling Heritage to Partner on Virtual Juneteenth Celebration

WHEELING, W.Va. – June 15, 2020 – The YWCA Wheeling and Wheeling Heritage are bringing the community a virtual Juneteenth celebration this year. The celebration will be premiered on both organizations' Facebook pages at 6 p.m. on June 19. The program features speakers and performers, and was filmed ahead of time due to social distancing measures.

Juneteenth commemorates the ending of slavery in the United States. The event dates back to June 19, 1865, when Union soldiers landed at Galveston, Texas, with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. This was more than two years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, which had become official January 1, 1863.

"We wanted this event to be a celebration. That's why it was so important to incorporate musical performers into the production this year," said Ron Scott, cultural diversity and community outreach director at the YWCA Wheeling. "It would be really easy to stay feeling down right now, but this is an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of the black community in Wheeling."

"When we took part in organizing Juneteenth as part of the Wheeling 250 Celebration last year, we said this will be an annual celebration, not just a one-off thing. When COVID-19 hit, we were unable to coordinate our committee as we'd hoped," said Betsy Sweeny, director of heritage programming at Wheeling Heritage. "We thought, 'What can we do to make good on our promise, and still stay safe?' This event looks a little different this year, but we hope everyone enjoys it."

Those that are interested in viewing the program can tune in to the Wheeling Heritage or YWCA Facebook page at 6 p.m. on June 19. Friends and family are encouraged to create their own "watch parties" to view the program together.

About YWCA Wheeling

YWCA Wheeling is on a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, stand up for social justice, help families and strengthen our community. The organization offers programming for family violence prevention, cultural diversity and community outreach, residence and emergency homeless sheltering and non-treatment recovery. YWCA Wheeling is an active member agency of the United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley.

About Wheeling Heritage

[Wheeling Heritage](#) is a catalyst for the revitalization of Wheeling. Through historic preservation, community development, and the arts, we help to tell Wheeling's story and shape its future. We seek to improve the quality of life in Wheeling by preserving and investing in our city, collaborating with others, and engaging the citizens of Wheeling in our work.