



Community Organizers Plan Wheeling's Juneteenth Celebration

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WHEELING, W.Va. – June 7, 2021 – Wheeling's third annual Juneteenth Celebration will be held in person this year on Saturday, June 19, to commemorate the end of slavery in America. The event will begin at 5 p.m. with a short ceremony at the north end of Market Plaza. The location is of significance as the space was once a slave auction block. After the ceremony, music, entertainment and food trucks will follow at Wheeling Heritage Port. The event is free and open to the public.

The Wheeling Juneteenth Committee, which is made up of representatives from Wheeling Heritage, Wheeling YWCA, City of Wheeling, Wheeling NAACP, Oglebay Institute and local leaders in the Black community, will host this year's event.

Juneteenth celebrations date 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 on January 1, 1863.

Speakers for the event's opening ceremonies include Loma Nevels, vice chair of the Wheeling Human Rights Commission; Dr. W. Franklin Evans, president of West Liberty University; Owens Brown, president of the West Virginia NAACP; and Glenn Elliott, mayor of the City of Wheeling.

After the ceremony, live entertainment will be held at Wheeling Heritage Port featuring performances by Ezra and the relatives, Keez, Tree of Life, Logan Wojcik, Darryl Watts and Tony Williams.

"We want to kick off this event with a ceremony, to remember those that came before us, but ultimately, Juneteenth is a celebration. That's why it is so important to incorporate music. We've all missed gathering, and this is an opportunity to gather safely in celebration," said Ron Scott, cultural diversity and community outreach director at the YWCA Wheeling, and chair of the Juneteenth Committee. "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 in 2019, we said this will be an annual celebration, not just a one-off thing. When COVID-19 hit, we transitioned our 2020



program to virtual. Now, in 2021, we are so happy to be able to start gathering again, and celebrating in person,” said Betsy Sweeny, director of Heritage Programming at Wheeling Heritage.

This event is free and open to the public. For more information or to get involved, contact Ron Scott at cdcodirector@ywcawheeling.org.

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.