



## Community Organizers Plan Wheeling's Juneteenth Celebration

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**WHEELING, W.Va.** – June 8, 2021 – Wheeling's Juneteenth Celebration will be held on Sunday, 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 The Plaza on Market. 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 the south end of the Plaza. 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 the Ohio Valley Underground Railroad Museum 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. Juneteenth was officially recognized as a US federal holiday on June 17, 2021.

Speakers for the event's opening ceremonies include Dr. Monique Akassi, Special Assistant to the President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at West Liberty University; Darryl Clausell, president of the West Virginia NAACP; Jerry Moore, president of the Belmont County NAACP; Rev. Twila Davis of the Macedonia Baptist Church; and Glenn Elliott, mayor of the City of Wheeling.

After the ceremony, music, entertainment and food trucks will follow at the south end of the plaza featuring performances by Voices of Praise, Isaiah Keez, and Soul Skool.

"I am so excited for our Juneteenth celebration this year. It is the culmination of a collaboration between different groups in the Ohio Valley that should make all of us proud to live here," said Ron Scott, cultural diversity and community outreach director at the YWCA Wheeling, and chair of the Juneteenth Committee. "The best part about this year's celebration is that the questions I'm getting are more than 'What is Juneteenth,' and is instead 'What are you guys doing for Juneteenth?' That shows me that we are focused on doing the right type of work."



“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. Now, three years later, we are so happy to be continuing this celebration, and growing it year over year,” said Betsy Sweeny, director of Heritage Programming at Wheeling Heritage.

In the days leading up to June 19, two new events are scheduled this year to celebrate Black history and culture. On Friday, June 17 at 12:30 p.m., The Ohio County Public Library will host a special edition of their Lunch With Books series focusing on the history of the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movement in the Ohio Valley presented by Kristina Estle, director and curator for the Underground Railroad Museum. On Saturday, June 18 at 5 p.m., professional reenactor and magician Rory Rennick will tell the story of Henry “Box” Brown with a magical twist. Following Rennick’s performance the Goree Drum and Dance Company will perform a traditional West African dance show.

All Wheeling Juneteenth events are free and open to the public. For more information or to get involved, visit [wheelingjuneteenth.com](http://wheelingjuneteenth.com) or contact Ron Scott at [cdcodirector@ywcawheeling.org](mailto: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.