

Hoop City Jazz and Art Festival to be Held July 4th Weekend at STCC

Jazz musicians from Ohio, Massachusetts, New York, Connecticut, Michigan, and South Carolina will gather at the Springfield Technical Community College campus on the weekend of the Fourth of July. Admission is free and parking is free at the 3rd Annual Hoop City Jazz and Art Festival.

Festival organizer John Osborn describes the event as “a huge community picnic with great music, great food, a variety of vendors to appeal to a variety of folks.” He said, “It’s a delicious, affordable way of bringing people together.”

Live jazz, artists, crafts vendors, and an international food court will be featured attractions. Also, people should feel free to bring their own picnics. Several family reunions will be coming, using the festival as a backdrop for their get-together. The Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club will also be at the festival, providing free food for children and under 12, and some children’s activities.

Osborn said Saturday’s lineup of musicians concentrates on smooth jazz and contemporary jazz, while Sunday’s schedule focuses on traditional jazz, as he says, the roots of Black classical music. The gates will be open both days starting at 11:00, primarily for family groups and others who want to stake out a claim to a particular area, for instance in front of the stage. The program starts at 1:30 each day, and ends by 8:00 or 8:30 p.m., in time on Saturday for folks to walk downtown to see the fireworks, and on Sunday to allow people coming from a distance to start their drive home.

The schedule is, with comments from Osborn, is:

Saturday, July 4

- 1:30 Marcus Pitts/Carl Neal Project
- 3:00 David Davis
graduate of the Hartt School of Music at the University of Hartford
- 4:30 Lin Rountree
from Detroit, similar to Louis Armstrong, high energy,
gets the audience involved
- 6:30 Urban Jazz Coalition
from Ohio, pioneers of smooth jazz; we’re excited to have them here on the
4th of July

Sunday, July 5

- 1:30 Charles Langford
local jazz musician, saxophone player, lot of music rooted in new Orleans jazz, and
NYC in the 50s
- 3:00 ESP
from Syracuse, a young, very accomplished group
- 4:30 Ron Gill
jazz vocalist from Boston, now living in South Carolina; sings in the tradition of Duke
Ellington, and Billy Strayhorn who composed Take the A Train. The 6-member
back-up band is reminiscent of the big-band feeling.

6:00 The Berklee Latin Jazz All-Stars

Closing out the festival, this group from the Berklee School of Music was voted best college jazz band 2008 by Downbeat Magazine. The group is coming in from Venezuela on an international tour.

The festival will go on, rain or shine. As Osborn says, "Jazz folks are used to dealing with the weather; if inclement weather is forecast, just come prepared."

This is the third annual Hoop City jazz and Art Festival, previously located at Riverfront Park in Springfield and this year held on the campus green at Springfield Technical Community College. Osborn noted that Hoop City, of course, is a reference to Springfield as the birthplace of basketball, and said that people coming from out of town may want to include a visit to the basketball hall of fame.