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'Hawkstock Music Festival to Benefit OKC High School

An old but beloved Oklahoma City amphitheater is the setting for 'Hawkstock Music Festival 2015, an outdoor music festival featuring an eclectic lineup of local musical artists, food trucks, kids' activities and more. The event benefits Harding Fine Arts Academy, an Oklahoma City public charter high school. 'Hawkstock takes place September 12, from 11am - 8 pm at the outdoor theater on the grounds of the iconic "dome" church, First Christian Church, N.W. 36th and Walker. Admission and parking are free.

Bands, small groups, and solo artists are scheduled, according to organizer Lance Lightner. "We've got two stages - one for acoustic performers - for everything from classical guitar to folk, indie, red-dirt, and rock and roll."

In preparation for last year's inaugural 'Hawkstock festival, school volunteers worked to renovate the 3,500-seat amphitheater, which was built in 1947 and at one time was the venue for outdoor church services, and performances by the adjacent Jewel Box Theater, but it had not been used in decades. With some help from local businesses, students, staff and parents painstakingly rebuilt the stage area, cleaned up the concrete seating and repaired and painted weathered wooden seat backs, and cleared away years of overgrown brush and tree branches. "We've enjoyed a great relationship with First Christian Church," Lightner said. "They're happy to have a useable outdoor theater again, and we're pleased to have a place to hold a music fundraiser for a school that is near and dear to us."

"This project was literally an answer to our prayers," said Reverend John Malget, Senior Minister for First Christian Church. "It has been our hope to use the amphitheater for outdoor events, but we have never had the manpower to do the improvements," he said.

The amphitheater had fallen into disrepair in recent years, but students and administrators from Harding Fine Arts Academy made church leaders an offer they couldn't refuse, Malget said.

Lightner said the 'Hawkstock name is a nod to the Woodstock festival. "Since the mascot for Harding Fine Arts Academy is the Firehawk, we decided 'Hawkstock' would be a good fit."



Now in its second year, the event features classical guitarist Edgar Cruz, rock band Think Like Ravens, dance/party musicians Urban Addiction, rock band The Happily Entitled, acoustic duo Bold McCoy, blues/rock/indie band The Part-Time Savants, red-dirt/Americana group The Broken Okies, and acoustic/folk/indie group The Indigos. In addition, there will be student and faculty performers from The Academy of Contemporary Music at the University of Central Oklahoma.

The festival offers more than music. Kids can pick a paintbrush and decorate a graffiti wall or sit down for some face painting, while kids and adults alike can buy a henna tattoo or jam at an open mike stage. Food trucks will offer various sweets, main dishes and other refreshments, and HFAA students will man a concession area stocked with candy, chips, soft drinks and water.

A newcomer to this year's event is The Escape OKC mobile unit, a live-action escape challenge. Small groups pay to be locked in a room filled with puzzles and riddles, with a set time limit to solve them and obtain a code that unlocks the door to the room.

Harding Fine Arts Academy is a Title I school, with the majority of students living in poverty. HFAA was named one of the top ten high schools in Oklahoma by the state department of education, and is one of three Oklahoma City high schools to earn an A+ rating by the Oklahoma A+ Schools organization.

"We're proud of what we've accomplished as a school, in the face of financial challenges and students who come from difficult family situations," said HFAA Principal Barry Schmelzenbach. "Support of the local business and arts communities, a healthy dose of parent and student volunteers and a committed staff gives Oklahoma City students the best possible arts-integrated education, and prepares them for college and the work world."

Admission to 'Hawkstock is free; donations are accepted and will help fund the school's music, arts, and academic programs. Guests are encouraged to bring seat cushions and blankets.

For more information about 'Hawkstock 2015, contact Linda Lightner, 405/702-4322, or visit Hawkstockfest.com, or the event's Hawkstock page on Facebook.

Harding Fine Art Academy's mission is to prepare high school students for college in an academically challenging, arts integrated environment