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JAHA UNVEILS AMERISERV FLOOD CITY MUSIC FESTIVAL

**Event replaces AmeriServ Johnstown FolkFest;
changes include new date, donation, new concessionaire**

(JOHNSTOWN, Pa.) – The Johnstown Area Heritage Association today announced some major changes to its signature special event, the former AmeriServ Johnstown FolkFest. The changes include a name change, to AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival, as well as a date change. The new festival will be held August 21-23, two weeks before the FolkFest’s traditional Labor Day weekend, and patrons will be asked for a donation at the gate.

There will be changes to the festival’s food vending also. The festival will be serviced by a master concessionaire, which will ensure a variety of menu items, quality foods and consistent pricing while retaining the popular Community Kitchen.

“There are a lot of changes here, but we are convinced they will provide some key improvements that are necessary for the festival’s economic well-being, and set the stage for future growth,” said Ron Carnevali, festival co-chairman.

Change in name and logo

The name “FolkFest” came from the festival’s origins, when JAHA, along with city and state officials, did the fundraising necessary to recruit the National Folk Festival to Johnstown for a three-year stay. When JAHA began producing the festival on its own in 1993, the name was changed to “FolkFest.”

“The FolkFest name has served us well, but over the years it’s become somewhat misleading,” noted Todd Wagner, festival co-chairman. “Folk’ implies that the music is all acoustic, which is absolutely not the case. We wanted a new name that reflects this city’s proud heritage but also lets people know that this festival is specifically a music festival, presenting all kinds of musical genres.”

The nickname “Flood City” refers to the historic 1889 flood, for which Johnstown is known nationwide. The new logo is designed to evoke the city’s proud steel and

industrial heritage, as well as the festival park's location next to the Cambria Iron & Steel National Historic Landmark.

"One aspect of the name stays the same, and that is that AmeriServ remains our title sponsor," Carnevali noted. "AmeriServ's continued support has been key to this event for years, and we are grateful."

Date change

The FolkFest traditionally occurred on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday of Labor Day weekend, but the new AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival will take place two weeks prior, on August 21, 22 and 23.

"Virtually all colleges and universities in this area and Pittsburgh start the Monday before Labor Day," Wagner explained. "College students are a natural market for a music festival, and we wanted to make our festival more attractive to them."

Labor Day weekend is also the same weekend as the Cambria City Ethnic Festival, the Forest Hills Festival, and the Log House Arts Festival. In addition, the first high school and college football games of the season are played that weekend.

"We think moving the date will allow local patrons to spend more time at all of these great events, and make them all stronger," Carnevali said.

Suggested donation

The festival is creating a suggested donation of \$5 per day on Friday, \$10 on Saturday, and \$10 on Sunday. Patrons will be asked to donate as they enter the festival gateways, the Walnut Street and Johns Street Bridges. Everyone who donates will receive a free schedule-on-a-string, the popular performance schedule on a lanyard that can be worn around the neck. Children under 16 or accompanied by an adult get in free.

The individual sponsorship program will include Gold (\$90), Silver (\$60) and Bronze (\$20) levels. Gold level sponsors will receive a parking pass for lots adjacent to and across from the train station on festival grounds, and two laminated credentials good for entrance into the sponsor lounge. Silver level sponsors will receive a parking pass for a Washington Street lot, across the street from festival grounds, plus two laminated credentials. Bronze level sponsors will receive one laminated credential. All individual sponsors with laminated credentials will be able to pass through the festival gateways on the Johns and Walnut Street Bridges without being asked for a donation – laminated credentials will function as a three-day pass. Individual sponsorships are already available for sale through the festival website.

Festival volunteers will receive a schedule-on-a-string and T-shirt, as in the past, and will not be asked to donate on the day(s) they volunteer.

Vending changes

The AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival will be serviced by a master concessionaire, Mom's Food Service of New Jersey. Many vendors who have vended at FolkFest in the past will be invited to work with Mom's as subcontractors. All food vendor tents will have a consistent branded festival look, which will enhance the festival's overall aesthetics and ensures that the signage, pricing and menu selections are clearly visible.

A few of the major festivals served by Mom's Food Service include All Points West of Liberty Park, N.J.; Langley Air Force Base Air Show of Hampton, Va.; and SunFest Music Festival of West Palm Beach, Fl.

Since 2004, area non-profits have been invited to cook and vend food at the FolkFest without paying a booth fee, and this popular tradition will continue at the AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival.

There will also be new opportunities for non-profits to participate in this year's festival to raise money for their own programs. The festival, along with Mom's, is introducing a revenue-share program for local non-profits to help serve food under the supervision of Mom's management. In return, the represented non-profit will receive a percentage of sales from that booth's proceeds. This program has been used countrywide at various events and has proved to be very successful for raising money.

Finally, with the changes being instituted this year, the festival will no longer use scrip.

"The elimination of scrip will be more convenient for festival patrons, who will now be able to pay cash at the booths," Carnevali said. "What's more, the administration of the scrip system required an enormous investment in festival staff and volunteer time. The new system will be much more efficient for everyone."

Other changes

The festival will eliminate one stage, going to a three-stage format rather than the four stages in the past. However, according to Ron Carnevali, the change will actually improve the festival's entertainment.

"This move will allow us to book fewer acts that are better-known, while retaining some performance slots for local and regional acts as well," Carnevali said. "Presenting bigger acts will make the festival more exciting and attract more people from out-of-town."

2009 festival lineup

The Derek Trucks Band has been confirmed as a headliner for the AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival 2009, sponsored by Bud Light. The Derek Trucks Band blends jazz, rock, blues, Latin, Eastern Indian, and other world music into the sound that now defines the DTB. Derek Trucks, the band's leader, is the youngest player to make *Rolling Stone's* "100 Greatest Guitarists of All Time" list. The nephew of original Allman Brothers Band drummer Butch Trucks, Derek has played with the Allman Brothers Band

since he was 10, becoming a permanent member in 1999. He has played with Eric Clapton and Carlos Santana, among many others. They will play on Sunday night only.

Others confirmed for the festival so far include the acoustic trio of Kane Welch Kaplin, alt-country singer Kristi Rose, and Americana band Gypsy Dave & the Stumpjumpers.

“We expect to have the full lineup in place in just a few weeks,” Carnevali said. “There are some exciting possibilities as far as the rest of the lineup, and we are excited about it. We’ll post additional acts on our festival website as soon as they are confirmed.”

A new website for the AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival has been launched at www.floodcitymusic.com.

JAHA is a non-profit, membership-based organization that exists to preserve and present Johnstown’s nationally significant stories to the nation. In addition to the AmeriServ Flood City Music Festival, it operates the Johnstown Flood Museum and the Heritage Discovery Center, as well as a variety of other cultural programs held throughout the year. In 2006 JAHA opened Wagner-Ritter House and Garden, and the Johnstown Children’s Museum will open later this spring. For more information on JAHA, visit www.jaha.org.

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