

Program Description for Madison Juneteenth Day Celebration

Juneteenth Day is a celebration of freedom for many African American communities across the nation. The celebration commemorates the freeing of the slaves in Texas on June 19, 1865. Madison has been celebrating this significant historical event since 1990. The Juneteenth Day Celebration is a program of Kujichagulia – Madison Center for Self- Determination and its Board of Directors oversees every program component of the Celebration.

Madison's Juneteenth Planning Committee each year develops programming to educate the overall Madison community on the historical accomplishments and contributions of Americans of African descent. For the past 24 years the Juneteenth Day Celebration has been a catalyst for showcasing and promoting the rich heritage of our community both past and present through various artistic genres. We provide an arena for this expression through the different components of the celebration: Main Stage, Heritage, Church, Youth, and Teens. Each component is housed in a vividly decorated tent.

The relentless quest for freedom and equality guided our ancestors and girded our forefathers through the Middle Passage, Slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the Civil Rights Era. It is the same quest and expectation that continues to be the thread that binds us together in these contemporary times. So as a response to that continued quest for freedom and true equality our Main Stage programming will exemplify the methods and movements employed historically by our community to gain freedom from the various systems of oppression. Staying in sync with the era-specific approach to our Celebration, the Collective Work will use dramatizations, music, dance and the spoken word to demonstrate the various genres that African Americans have use to express their individual and collective pursuit of freedom.

Madison Juneteenth Day Celebration has the same significance to African Americans that the 4th of July has to all Americans, its independence. It represents freedom, pride and unity as a people. It commemorates the reading of the order set forth by the Emancipation Proclamation on June 19, 1865 by General Granger that freed all slaves. Until that day more than 250,000 African Americans were still living and working as slaves despite being freed by the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. June 19th, or "Juneteenth" as it came to be called, became a celebration of freemen in the Southwest. Initially centered on family gathering with food, storytelling, sports, and games, the Celebration has developed into elaborate community festivals featuring famous entertainers, parades, exhibits, fairs and in some cities an array of political actions and weekend festivities. Yet each Celebration continues to focus on the African American legacy of freedom through family-centered activities and programming.

The Celebration goals and mission is to improve the quality of life for Madison's African-American community through positive reinforcement of its heritage as well as enhancing its ability to become a more effective part of the total Madison Community. The Celebration focus has been to unite Madison's African American community. Goals for the Celebration are to:

- Unite Madison's geographically, economically and socially divided black community, including its African and Caribbean segments, by celebrating our shared African heritage
- Provide information to educate the black community on health and social issues that impact our lives and connect community members with service providers that can meet our needs
- Build relationships between the black community and the greater Madison community by partnering with local business and agencies that provide funding or informational booths and by sharing our history with other member of the community
- Showcase the wealth of creative talent in the black community, particularly that of our youth, and to promote in them a health sense of pride, confidence and accomplishments
- Expose children to the richness of African and African-American culture and heritage, teach them about their community and provide by example the ability to celebrate life without the assistance of drugs, alcohol or any other mind- or mood-altering substances.

The Annual Juneteenth Day Celebration is currently held on the 3rd Saturday in June in Penn Park. The outdoors venue has continued to be beneficial to the Celebration. It is the festive feel and the historical significance of Penn Park that makes it the most appropriate setting for the Celebration. The park is located in the heart of Madison's south side community, which validates the Celebration within the context of the African-American community. The Annual Celebration held in Penn Park attracted 8,000 of Madison and Dane County residents from all walks of life. The Juneteenth Day Planning Committee's mission was to bring Madison's African-American community together to celebrate the riches of its shared experience, but in essence the Celebration has become a vehicle for all Dane County residents to share in that experience. The majority of Madison's African-American Community attends the Celebration, and it is reaching an increasingly larger number of Latino, African, and European-American Madisonians as well. Considering the ethnic and generational diversity of the Celebration's attendees, Juneteenth is rapidly becoming a community-wide attraction. Attendees also include individuals representing various socio-economic groups. The audience is truly reflective of Madison and Dane County's diverse population.

The Collective Work as well as all other performances will incorporate the Celebration's theme into its expressional forms. Most of these performances will take place on the Main Stage, which is the central focus of the Celebration. It is the largest tent and is centrally and prominently located in the park to be both the most visible and most audible attraction at the Celebration.

The Celebration will kick off with the Annual Parade. Incorporated into the parade is a section dedicated to the civil rights era, such as a recreation of the March from Selma to Montgomery. Young people representing the neighborhood centers throughout Dane County created banners and routines that reflected the mood of the era. The tradition of circulating character actors throughout the parade continued, especially those famous for their involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. The parade started in the Fountain of Life Worship Center's parking lot, moved through the south side to Penn Park and climaxed at the Park with a rendition of a speech of an historical African American figure such as Dr. King or Frederick Douglas.

The onsite activities will begin around 11:00 a.m. with the arrival of the parade and Juneteenth Day Executive Committee. Activities include booths and food vendors, with browsing music from the Main Stage D.J. The Heritage area will showcase the connection among American, Caribbean and African black people and our cultures through our shared customs, music and food. It provides an opportunity for each community to celebrate our rich joint heritage by focusing on our similarities. Representatives from the African, Caribbean and African-American communities; prepared dishes; craft demonstrations; performances and shared information will educate attendees about our shared experiences.

The Youth and Teen areas will provide a place for our youth (our hope) to express themselves through sharing various talents and gifts; to interact effectively and positively with their peers from other parts of the community, to celebrate without destructive activities and to learn about their history and the contributions of their ancestors. The Church Area is explosive with the common thread that truly binds us together. This area has blossomed into one of the highlights of the Celebration. It will bring the voices of our grandmothers to meet and embrace the liturgical dance of today's youth together to weave a tapestry of hope through our faith through its faith-based programming. The Toddler area will provide a place for the youngest attendees to enjoy the celebration through games, story-telling, face paintings, educational activities and positive interactions with professional teachers and childcare staff, volunteer grandparents. The Health Tent will provide education, health checks and screenings to attendees through partnerships with Meriter, St. Mary's and UW Hospitals and Clinics, the State Department of Health and Human Services. Information will focus on health issues that are more prevalent in the African American community.

Main Stage Entertainment: The focus of the Main Stage is to serve as a catalyst for the whole Juneteenth Celebration, to showcase and promote the rich heritage of our community both past and present through performances by community members. It provides the arena for young people and adults to share their artistic gifts, to obtain knowledge about and to experience the many components of the black experience through family oriented entertainment. It provides high quality, enjoyable and appealing expressions that can appeal to all who attend the Celebration.

The Juneteenth Planning Committee organizes The Celebration each year. This Committee is made up of community members and community agency staff that work under the direction of the Juneteenth Executive Committee. The Executive Committee members include Annie Weatherby-Flowers, Mona Adams Winston, Jacquelyn Hunt

and Jonathan Gramling. The Juneteenth Executive Committee meets weekly and oversees the functions of the Planning Committee and all of its Sub-Committees.

The Juneteenth Day Celebration has over the years established itself as the largest event in the Madison African American community. The Publicity subcommittee accesses all media outlets, including guest spots on television and radio programs. It circulates fliers and posters throughout the city, utilizing community centers and church bulletins. It places ads in local magazines, publications, and school and community papers. Juneteenth is also listed in the Wisconsin Tourism Guide. Word of mouth still continues to be one of our primary sources of advertisement. It is one of the most effective means of promoting the Celebration to date. We will continue, as budget allows to place ads, do bulk mailings, purchase bus signs and fliers to reach a broader sector of the Madison and Dane County communities.