

HILLIARD

Old Hilliardfest Art & Street Fair will make comeback Sept. 4

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For the first time, Old Hilliardfest Art & Street Fair visitors will be able to take advantage of Hilliard's Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area.

The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sept. 4 on the streets of Old Hilliard.

Main Street between Madison and North streets and Center, Franklin and Norwich streets between Columbia and Wayne streets will be closed to vehicles during the event.

Robert Vance, secretary of the Hilliard Civic Association, which organizes the festival, said planning was a "challenge," but organizers wanted to resume Hilliard's "flagship festival."

Like most other fairs and festivals in 2020, the Old Hilliardfest Art & Street Fair was canceled because of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

Launched in 1985 as Old Hilliard Day by a handful of business owners, including Otie Blankenship, founder of Otie's Tavern & Grill, the annual festival has changed formal names, organizers and location, but it traditionally has been on the second weekend in September, which also is changing this year.

At the request of the city, the Old Hilliardfest Art & Street Fair was moved up a week so it would not conflict with an expanded ceremony Hilliard officials are planning at First Responders Park on Sept. 11 to observe the 20th-anniversary memorial for the nearly 3,000 people killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Although organizers obtained a liquor permit that allowed for the sale and possession of alcohol on the street during past festivals, this year is the first that the festival will be presented as a DORA event, Vance said.

As such, festival-goers will be able to purchase alcohol at any of the restaurants and taverns that are part of the DORA, Vance said.

From 2017 to 2019, the DORA was in effect only on some Thursdays and Saturdays. In 2020, it was modified to include four days a week, and then in 2021, it was expanded to seven days a week from June through October.

The DORA has nine operating participants: Abner's Casual Dining, 4051 Main St.; Otie's Tavern & Grill, 5344 Center St.; the Old Bag of Nails Pub, 4065 Main St.; Local Cantina, 3975 Main St.; Starliner Diner, 4121 Main St.; Legacy Smokehouse, 3987 Main St.; Yabo's Tacos at 5242 Cemetery Road; the Makoy Center at 5462 Center St.; and Crooked Can Brewing Co., 5354 Center St.

Two other restaurants will be in the DORA when they open: Sexton's Pizza, 5460 Franklin St., and HillGarten, 4131 Main St.

Neither will be open by Sept. 4, according to Andy Warnock, who owns the building that Sexton's will occupy, and Marty Nowak, co-owner of HillGarten,

Benito's Restaurant Bar and Grill, 5286 Center St., also was in the DORA, but owner Liz White sold the business in late June and it has remained closed since then.

As a DORA event, people who attend Old Hilliardfest now may enter any of the DORA establishments, purchase alcohol and resume shopping or listening to live music during the event, Vance said.

Meanwhile, the festival will have about 80 vendors, which is fewer than pre-COVID events, Vance said.

There will be games for children but no inflatable attractions because of the time-consuming effort to clean the equipment after each use, he said.

The lineup of live music and entertainment also will be limited to a single stage for this year, Vance said.

Vance said organizers might keep the festival on the first weekend of September moving forward but will use this year's event to gauge attendance. However, he acknowledged it might be difficult to determine, if attendance is lower than usual, if it is because of the Labor Day weekend or a shift toward avoiding crowds as COVID-19 cases in Ohio are increasing again, Vance said.

For details on vendors, entertainment and other information about the Old Hilliardfest Art & Street Fair, go to oldhilliardfest.org.

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