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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FireFish Festival Transforms Downtown Lorain September 20-21, 2019
Free festival offers performances, art and activities for all ages

LORAIN, OHIO (September 3, 2019)—The 5th Annual FireFish Festival is gearing up to be the biggest and best yet in its fifth year. Each year a different theme is selected and this year's theme focuses on pyrophytic plants—plants that are often resistant to fire, and some that even require fire to germinate and reproduce. FireFish has been lighting a fire in Lorain in the festival's culmination of the Burning of the Fish, and we invite all of Northeast Ohio to join in the fun this year.

The festival is presented by FirstEnergy as well as a host of other sponsors and supporters (see below).

"The FirstEnergy Foundation is proud to support local nonprofit organizations that help strengthen the social and economic fabric of our communities," said Lorna Wisham, vice president of corporate affairs and community involvement at FirstEnergy. "FireFish uses the arts not only to bring our community together but to highlight for all the potential and economic opportunity of the City of Lorain."

FireFish will feature a variety of art installations and performances across multiple genres. While there are some returning artists, many new artists will be performing or exhibiting their art this year. Below are some of the featured performers and artists visitors will see, hear and enjoy at this year's festival.

Artist Chris Seibert will feature "Love's Lost Raree Box." This portable interactive art encourages people to encounter and participate in the art for themselves. Her "Raree Box" will illuminate the concept of pyrophytic seeds and help attendees apply personal meaning to the imagery, looking inside the artwork to reveal a landscape that participants can explore. Inspired by centuries-old traveling showmen and their wondrous rarity ('raree') boxes, the work intends to infuse neighborhood settings with mystery and wonder, and to engage willing audience members in the sharing of their own stories of love, loss, longing, magic and origins.

Kevin Jackson returns to FireFish and will again share his projection mapping installation, this time on the exterior of the Northwest Bank Building on Broadway. Jackson is actively involved in the arts scene in Cleveland and is currently Interactive Video Distance Learning Operator for Lorain County Community College (LCCC).

A second projection installation is being created by James Lascko, who will be animating Founder's Alley between 4th and 5th Streets with his "Ali Baba's Broken Entrance Way to the Stars." Inspired by "The Arabian Nights" story, prerecorded music with a mid-eastern flavor will accompany visual projections of planets, alien planetscapes, star fields and various artistic depictions of alien life forms and will draw in visitors from both ends of the alley to experience the art found in this space.

LCCC STEAM Academy will present “Steelyard Meadow.” A large scale fine art installation created by the Lorain County Community College’s STEAM Academy teens in collaboration with artist/instructor Ryan Craycraft, this installation reflects the FireFish theme of pyrophytic plants. Like those plants, the piece embodies the history and spirit of Lorain as a city forged through fire and transforming itself into the future.

Last year artist Melissa Daubert catapulted visitors into a “Tornado” with her interactive exhibit, and she returns this year with “Bike Buddee.” Visitors will have the opportunity to bring this quirky kinetic roaming artwork to life as they pedal the three-wheeled sculpture around festival grounds!

Lorain native Jevon Terance will be arriving home from New York Fashion Week just in time to execute his only Ohio show this year. Staged in Gallery 383 with the Steelyard Meadow (see above) as backdrop, the location is sure to showcase his artistry and sense of fashion.

On the performing arts stages, last year’s Friday night headliner, Carlos Jones and the P.L.U.S. Band, will again close out opening night of the festival with their high-energy reggae dance music that gets everyone on their feet.

Saturday’s headliner is La Gran Combinación. This orchestra is made up of 21 of northeast Ohio's finest musicians, and features the following: 2018 Tri-C Jazzfest Legends award winner Jackie Warren on piano; the "Godfather" of congas" Ray Guzman; and, FireFish repeat performer, Sammy Deleon on timbales. Other members of the ensemble include Eric Dregne, and the Skatch Anderssen Orchestra provides 13 of the best horn players in town including: Scott McKee on lead trumpet; young trumpet phenom Tommy Lehman; musicians and educators Mark Russo, Rich Rollo, Chad Komocki on drums; and, Eric Dregne, a local musician who is considered a big band and salsa historian.

Many other artists, dancers and performers will also be on stages and in performance venues throughout the festival. Local group, IN2ATIVE, embraces its classical roots, but strays from the traditional flute and cello stereotype. This avant-garde duo, consisting of Kimberly Zaleski (flute) and Trevor Kazarian (cello), met as students at the Cleveland Institute of Music. Their music combines the street rhythms of beat-box with classical, rock, and electronic music, creating their own unique genre. All of their pieces are original compositions, inspired by events and experiences, both past and present.

Benjamin Bill is a rapper, Clearview High School teacher, and football coach from Lorain. Benjamin uses his life experiences from his hometown to paint vivid imagery, tell stories, and teach life lessons through his lyrics. He found stardom in 2012, when The Game rapped his lyrics and shouted him out on YouTube. Since then, Benjamin Bill has rocked stages such as RoverFest, and has been heard on radio stations nationwide. His music industry collaborations include platinum producers Young Chop and Havoc (Mobb Deep), and he has worked with Billboard Top 100 Artists Tory Lanez and Roscoe Dash. His latest album, Room 105, and EP Pull Up, are currently available on all download and streaming platforms.

The footprint of the festival remains the same as last year—on Broadway Ave. between Erie Ave. and Fifth Street—the festival hours have been extended based on past attendees’ feedback. Saturday hours are expanded from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m., and visitors can participate in family friendly free art classes and activities, and visit an afternoon market featuring local artists and artisans. Some of the art families can make includes hats, percussion instruments and costumes, as well as dance lessons that they can perform later that night as participants in the parade.

The centerpiece of the festival will be 383 Broadway, the former Ameritrust Bank, where over 15 artists are working with the raw unfinished space that will eventually house a brewery.

Schuyler White, nationally recognized founder of Ohio Burn Unit, will once again oversee special effects and pyrotechnics with a finale of the burning of the 30-ft by 15-ft fish in a blaze of glory. The parade leading to this culminating performance and interactive experience steps off on Saturday at 7:30pm.

The mission of FireFish Arts, Inc. is to enhance cultural, civic and economic development in Lorain and Lorain County through visionary arts events, pioneering arts programming, community arts education and critical arts leadership. "The City of Lorain celebrates the work of FireFish, its founders, board and staff, as it celebrates its fifth year. The organization and the festival itself embody the spirit of Lorain and the creative charisma of our community as it moves forward to rediscover its greatness," said Mayor Joe Koziura.

All concerts and exhibits are family friendly. And, for those who would like to be a part of the festival, volunteers are still needed. Please visit the website for more information at www.firefishfestival.com.

Preview Opportunities

FireFish has several special guests that would make for an eye catching, fascinating studio or on site preview. Fire dancers from Fire and Light Performing Arts (<http://www.fireandlightarts.com>) would be available and have an LED light twirling option for indoor performance. FireFish's pyrotechnician, Hollywood stuntman and the CEO of the Ohio Burn Unit (<http://ohioburnunit.com/OhioBurnUnit/home.html>) is available to share details of the Burning of the Fish and the behind the scenes work of fire entertainment. Daniel McNamara, our parade and Burning of the Fish artist and puppeteer, could tell the story of the burning, its meaning and purpose and give a behind the scenes look at the building of the fish in a Lorain warehouse. Jevon Terance, Lorain native and fashion designer will return from new York Fashion week right before the festival and could preview some the designs that will be seen at FireFish, his only Ohio show this year. Festival Director, Emily Hoag, is available for general overview and to give festival highlights.

About FireFish

FireFish Arts works to enhance cultural, civic and economic development in Lorain and Lorain County through visionary arts events, pioneering arts programming, community arts education and critical arts leadership.

The FireFish Festival is presented by FirstEnergy Foundation with support from the Ohio Arts Council. Other sponsors include Nordson Corporation, Nordson Foundation, The Morning Journal, Northwest Bank, United Way of Greater Lorain County, Heidelberg Distributors, DD214 Chronical, Mercy Health, 1-888-OHIO-COMP, LCCC, Lorain County Commissioners, Community Foundation of Lorain County and the Nord Family Foundation. For a complete list of sponsors, go to www.firefisharts.com.