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## **Blue Plum Festival Brings Art and Music to Downtown Johnson City**

JOHNSON CITY, Tenn.—Each year in June, 65,000 people flock to the site of the Blue Plum Post

Office, the first post office in the Johnson City area, which sorted its first letter and sold its first stamps in July 1849, to celebrate the region’s rich arts, crafts and music communities. On the first weekend in June, Main Street, Market Street, Roan Street and Buffalo Street in downtown Johnson City come alive to celebrate the art and music community at the Blue Plum Festival.

The Blue Plum Festival features local and national entertainment, animation contests, handmade arts and crafts, children’s activities, a 5K run and food concessions. The unique downtown shops, Hands On! Regional Museum, restaurants and antique shops are also open for visitors to explore.

“The Blue Plum Festival has turned into a major annual Johnson City event that brings together people from different states to enjoy the two-day outdoor festival,” said Brenda Whitson, executive director with the Johnson City Convention and Visitors Bureau. “The festival really showcases the community and what we have to offer, but it has evolved and today includes artists from other regions as well. The Blue Plum Festival is free, and it is very successful at providing something for all age groups to enjoy.”

Friends of Old Downtowne, a volunteer organization that works to preserve the historical legacy of Johnson City, established the festival in 1999, and it still sponsors the festival today.

“The Blue Plum Festival originated when the Friends of Old Downtowne decided that Johnson City needed an annual festival,” said Christine Murdock, festival coordinator.

The Blue Plum features an extensive musical line-up throughout Friday and Saturday.

“Americana genre is the majority of the music at the festival, but there is also a mix of other genres, including country, rock and bluegrass,” said Murdock.

Art vendors provide festival attendees with an eclectic mix of art to choose from, including crafts, woodwork, pottery, jewelry, paintings, photography, sculptures and metalwork. All art vendors will have products available for purchase, and some will also be providing live demonstrations.

“There is a type of art to match every specific and diverse taste,” said Whitson. “It’s a showcase of the art community, all gathered in one central location for visitors, exhibiting art skills and talents from regional artists.”

In addition to the arts and music, the festival will include an animation celebration, which will showcase the creations of international animators competing to win awards based on artistic, story, merit and technical proficiency.

“We have an excellent digital media department at East Tennessee State University, and ETSU wanted to tie in an animation celebration with the Blue Plum Festival,” said Murdock. “The Blue Plum Animation Festival is the only animation festival in the area.”

Animation entries will be compiled and presented at *The Charles* for festival visitors to watch each of the ten-minute films.

“There are a variety of styles and themes,” said Whitson. “It’s amazing to see just how creative people are.”

Munsey Church, along with Hands On! Regional Museum and various Johnson City organizations sponsor a children’s area, hosting free activities and games for kids of all ages, including participation prizes.

Festivalgoers who want to test their athletic ability can participate in extreme sports demonstrations or run through the streets of downtown Johnson City in the Blue Plum 5K. The Blue Plum 5k is a three-mile run that starts at the Johnson City Fountain Square and travels through

downtown Johnson City. The 5K, sponsored by Mountain State Health Alliance and partners with the State of Franklin Track Club, benefits the Blue Plum Festival.

For more information, please visit [www.blueplum.org](http://www.blueplum.org), or call (423) 928-3479.

Johnson City is located in Northeast Tennessee and is the fourth largest metropolitan city in the state. Set in a region known as America's First Frontier, Johnson City is “Where the Pioneer Spirit Began”—a historically significant and culturally rich community surrounded by an abundance of unspoiled natural beauty. Johnson City has a history, which dates back more than 200 years, and its culture embraces individual creativity and encourages innovation through expression. The area is world-renowned for its modern and traditional Appalachian and bluegrass music, art and cuisine, and outdoor recreation for the whole family throughout all four seasons. For more information on Johnson City, please visit [www.visitjohnsoncitytn.com](http://www.visitjohnsoncitytn.com) or call (423) 461-8000 or (800) 852-3392.

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