

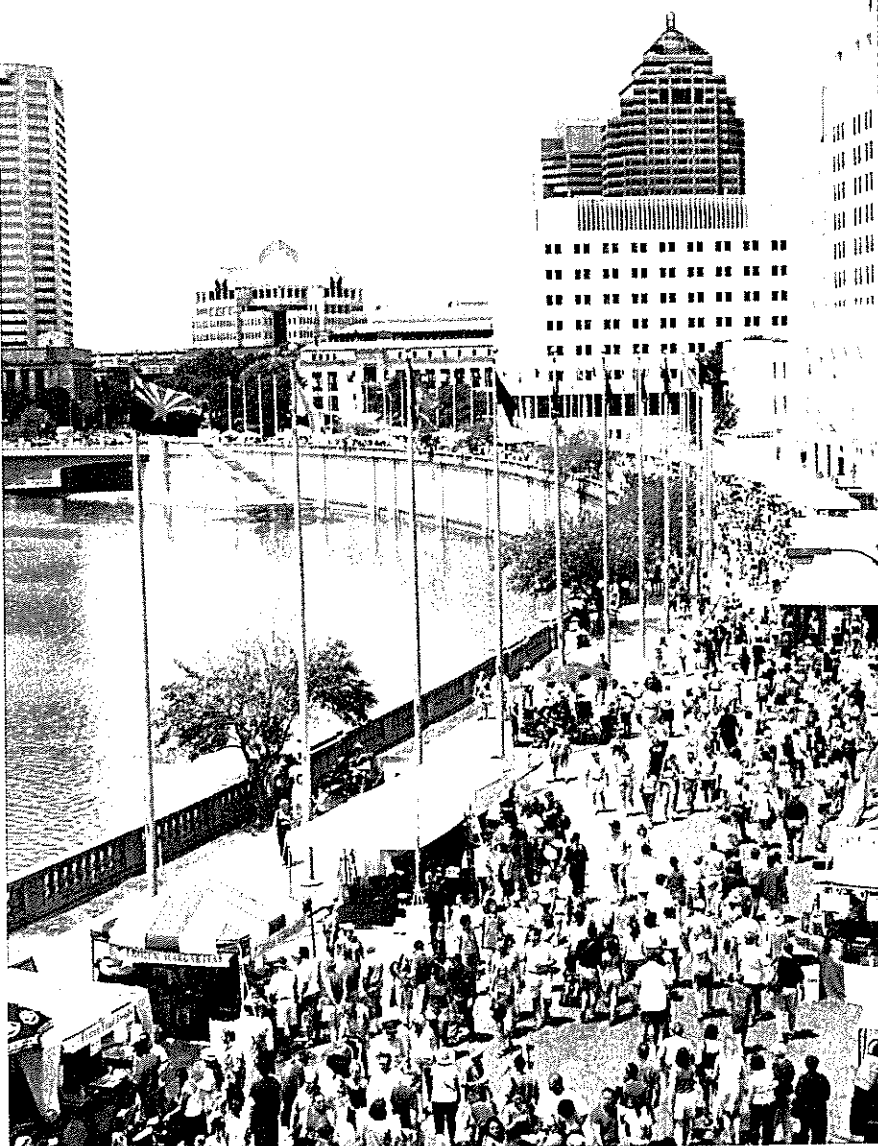
Down by the river

After a four-year absence, the Arts Festival returns home with two big changes: the completion of the Scioto Mile and the hiring of a new executive director.

BY NICOLE
KRAFT

The grass is still wet from a recent rain, but Bicentennial Park in early spring is alive with dog walkers and office workers eating lunch on benches. “Hard to Say” by Dan Fogelberg plays over speakers that ring the fountains where children will frolic when the summer temperatures climb. Outside tables at the new restaurant, Milestone 229, are filling on this unseasonable 80-degree afternoon.

Scott Huntley, as he has nearly every day since taking over earlier this year as director of the Columbus Arts Festival, walks the Scioto Mile along Civic Center Drive. He ends up on the Main Street side of the park and, with his suit coat slung over his right shoulder, surveys the landscape.



COLUMBUS DISPATCH FILE PHOTO

“Stand right in this place,” he says, “and imagine.”

Imagine booths of art up one bridge and down the other. And tents offering food from the finest Columbus restaurants, while popcorn, pretzel and lemonade stands dot the grassy landscape—as well as up to 500,000 people gathered for a single weekend to launch the city’s slate of summer entertainment.

He’s referring to the 2012 Columbus Arts Festival, the first major event for the revamped riverfront, which opened in July 2011. It’s been 51 years since the first Columbus Arts Festival, which has blossomed into what many consider the capital’s top festival, and it continues to evolve. After spending the past four years in the

The Columbus Arts Festival, on the riverfront before Scioto Mile construction forced it to the Discovery District.

Discovery District due to Scioto Mile construction, the festival returns to its riverfront home June 1 through 3.

But that relocation means Huntley must learn on the job—and quickly—all the challenges that come with shifting to a location still under construction. The biggest headache is the completion of the Rich Street Bridge: It is slated to open exactly one day before the festival’s launch.

“That is what keeps me up at night,” admits Huntley. “But I’ve seen railings go up. And I’ve seen them cut the granite for



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We hear the term "fracking" daily, but what does it mean and what does it have to do us in with central Ohio? Hydraulic fracturing, or fracking for short, began here in the 1950s, and Ohio is now only behind Texas, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania in wells drilled. Unlike vertical wells, fracturing allows natural gas to be tapped much farther below the surface, from the Marcellus and Utica Shale regions, which cover about half the state. By some estimates there may be enough natural gas in the Marcellus to supply the country's energy needs for two years.

Before resources can be tapped, prospecting companies must first negotiate with property owners. Owners who may not be familiar with this science should become knowledgeable about leasing options and ways to protect rights and property. A savvy property owner should thoroughly research the company or landsman, check references, talk to neighbors, and verify the reliability of people you could be in business with for years.

A property owner should negotiate not only rental payments but also duration/expiration of the lease, royalties, and other contractual components. The company's skills, expertise and limitations should be understood, and you should know whether that company will do the work or if it will assign its lease rights to another company. This often happens with companies who may not have sufficient expertise or resources to drill deep.

Property owners should also know their surface rights. Will you be able to influence where wells are drilled, access roads are built, storage tanks are located, or meters are placed? Will you be paid for the removal of trees, crops, or buildings? What is the long-term environmental, health and safety impact to your property? A lease is more than just a set of payment terms. It legally establishes terms of your business relationship with an oil and gas company for generations to come.

Maria Mariano Guthrie practices Business Litigation, Commercial and Banking Law at Carlile Patchen & Murphy LLP. For more information about leases and oil-and-gas rights, please contact Maria at 614.628.0768 or mguthrie@cpmlaw.com.



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curbs. I've seen progress, so I believe it will get done."

"Although moving an event of this size to a new location is quite a feat, [our staff and volunteers] do have 25 years of experience of holding this festival near its new location," Huntley adds. "This can be an advantage and a disadvantage since we are truly moving back—to a brand new home."

The idea of coming home is what attracted Huntley to take the festival director job—despite the fact he is a California native. A former Disneyland entertainment staffer (Disney won't let him say exactly what he did), Huntley parlayed all he learned at the "Happiest Place on Earth" into a career as an event producer for companies and organizations such as Boeing, AT&T, the Boy Scouts of America and the NCAA Final Four's Coach/Player of the Year awards.

Damage to the Los Angeles area economy caused by a 1994 earthquake prompted him to head east for work, and he landed at Mills James Creative Media. He met his wife, Tobey, an OhioHealth parenting consultant, on the set of a Mills James project.

The couple returned to California, but the 2003 birth of son Ryan brought the Huntleys back to family in Columbus, and Scott Huntley's transient life began. In addition to his continuing work with Mills James, he served as executive producer of live events for BT West Business Theater Productions in Newport Beach, California.

But when Ryan told his father, "Don't leave," on the eve of one more cross-country flight, Huntley realized enough was enough. "I had already been gone three or four weeks and realized my main connection with my son was over Skype," he says. "That's when I knew it had to change." Huntley's father-in-law saw an ad for the Arts Festival director and he told him "this job was written for you."

Festival organizers soon agreed. "Just looking at his experience, if I could have prayed to the employment gods, Scott would have been the perfect person for the position," says Jami Goldstein, vice president of marketing, communications and events for the Greater Columbus Arts Council, which oversees the festival. "As soon as I met him, it was an immediate click, as far as personality. He's very outgoing—a fun person who thinks creatively. His depth of experience and the types of events he has done made him ideal. We needed someone we knew could take the festival to the next level. Scott is perfect for that."

Huntley came on board in February and wasted no time guiding the festival—with plans focused even more by its new/old location. The festival, which was started in 1961 by the Downtown Area Commission to rejuvenate Columbus's urban center, actually was born on the Statehouse lawn, just four months after John Glenn's orbit of Earth. Called the Festival of the Arts, it showcased the best local artists, performers and food vendors to prove Columbus may have been small and Midwestern, but it had artistic flair.

It eventually outgrew those roots, prompting the Greater Columbus Arts Council in 1983 to shift it to the riverfront, where festivals were held everywhere from the Broad Street Bridge to in front of the old Central High School (now COSI) and on both sides of Civic Center Drive, says Huntley.

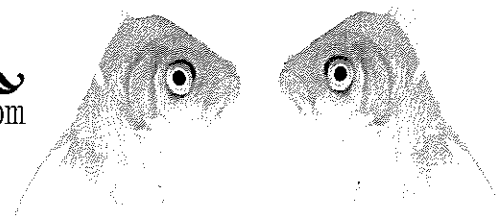
By the mid 2000s, its budget had grown to a peak of \$590,000 (it has since leveled off to around \$550,000), with money raised primarily through donations and entry fees to pay for tents, security, marketing, insurance and other expenses.

Its biggest change came in 2008, when plans for the Scioto Mile development forced a move to the Discovery District, home of the Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus College of Art & Design and Columbus State Community College. Despite the strong artistic bent of the area, many felt it was cramped and lacked a natural flow, which forced patrons to search for vendors and food options. The downtown location also lacked green space, shade and benches, which caused attendance to dip, Goldstein says.

"I heard anecdotally from people that the riverfront was where the festival belonged, and they did not intend to come back until it was back at the riverfront," she says. "But the Discovery District was a tremendous partner for us. Logistically, it was good. It's a personal preference. Some like green space; some people liked aspects of the partners we had in the Discovery District. Our surveys showed that a majority of people wanted us to come back to the river."


That view is echoed by city leaders such as Mayor Mike Coleman, who has long been a supporter of the Arts Festival and believes it "belongs on the riverfront," says spokesman Dan Williamson. "The Discovery District did a great job hosting over the past few years, but the mayor feels the riverfront is where it should be. Considering the festival's history on the riverfront, it is exciting to see how the

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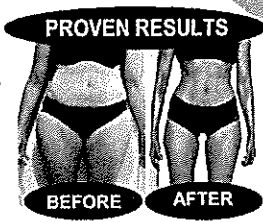
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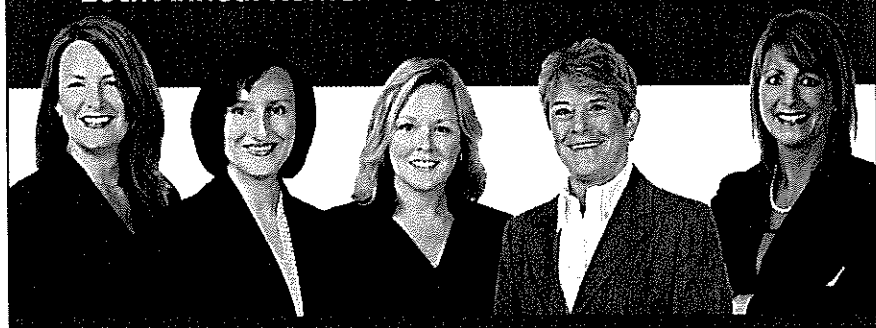
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Arts Festival integrates with the vibrant new riverfront area.”

The configuration of the riverfront provides the best possible festival flow, says Huntley. The 2012 edition now is set in a quadrilateral, with artist booths set along Civic Center Drive, across the Main Street Bridge, along Washington Boulevard in front of COSI and, if the weather and construction gods cooperate, down the new Rich Street Bridge.

The circular route lets visitors enter and exit at the same spot. Spurs off the main route will feature food options from Dine Originals Columbus, a group of upscale independent Columbus restaurants, as well as word art (such as storytelling and poetry) and a family art area.

If the bridge is not completed, Huntley admits there will be some backtracking, but he stresses it will not compromise any features of the 2012 festival. The most significant element will, once again, be the artist booths, increased this year to 237 from 230 in 2011. “It’s a delicate balance, in terms of how many exhibitors to have at the festival,” says Goldstein. “Too few is not attractive for visitors, and too many makes it hard for each artist to make money. We want to serve the needs of everyone.”

Although Huntley says he recognizes he has neither the time nor the perspective to know all of those needs yet, he says he’s surrounded by the expertise of a fleet of 250 volunteers, many of whom have been donating their efforts to the event for more than two decades.

“They have spent thousands of man-hours poring over every detail of this festival, from the jurying of the artist participants to the placement of the Porta-Potties,” he says.

And Huntley’s past experience won’t hurt, either. He credits his Disney training with helping him focus on the experience of each guest. That’s why he is putting food at a variety of locations to keep lines down and options up. That’s why he plans to sell necessities such as towels and T-shirts by the fountains in Bicentennial Park.

“I’m sure that there will be a few hairs pulled out,” Huntley says, “as we implement our as-yet-untested plans for move in and move out—the two most critically planned aspects of the festival—since we will be utilizing entry and exit points, which in some cases have never been driven on. But I have faith that the festival will go quite smoothly, and it will feel to the patrons and artists alike, as if we never left.” ■

Nicole Kraft is a freelance writer.