



FOR THE COMMON GOOD
EMPOWERING THE HILLTOP COMMUNITY
THROUGH ARTS & CULTURE

For Immediate Release

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Hilltop Arts Collective to Empower the Hilltop Community Through the Arts

Summer Jam West Renames to Hilltop Arts Collective

Columbus, OH (February 8, 2022) - Summer Jam West, the organization behind the community arts & music festival of the same name, announced today that it will begin operating under the name Hilltop Arts Collective. The annual festival will continue as Summer Jam West as a program under the broader work of the Hilltop Arts Collective.

The name change reflects the organization's transition from primarily a festival focus to an expanded focus on year-round arts programming for the Hilltop. The growth follows the organization's launch of new programs and partnerships in 2021, providing additional opportunities to benefit the Hilltop community through arts and culture.

"Summer Jam West has been such a valuable stakeholder in the Hilltop community – working to invest in people, places and spaces to build a healthier, happier and more beautiful neighborhood," said Melissa Green, City of Columbus West Side Pride Center Manager. "Rebranding to the Hilltop Arts Collective is a natural next step for the organization's growth and development. Amidst the backdrop of dramatic growth and redevelopment across Columbus' West Side, the Hilltop Arts Collective will be a key partner in helping to shape the vision for the future of the neighborhood."

Summer Jam West was founded in 2014 by then-Hilltop resident Patti Von Niessen, who felt that art was sorely missing on the Hilltop, and sought to bring in the arts in a community-led way. What began as a small grassroots arts and music festival on a shoestring budget quickly grew into something bigger and more meaningful to the community. In 2015, a public art component was incorporated into the annual festival; the organization commissioned a permanent piece of public art for the benefit of the Hilltop community. Over time, both the festival and public art commissions grew in prominence and scale.

In 2020, after seven years of growing Summer Jam West from an idea and scrappy team of volunteers to a full-fledged nonprofit arts organization, Von Niessen stepped down to pursue her much-deserved second retirement. Rachel Pace, who coordinated the festival, also stepped down. Von Niessen and Pace each devoted countless hours and seemingly endless energy to making the festival and organization what it is today.



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The departure of Von Niessen and Pace was a pivotal moment for the all-volunteer team. Board member Danny Peterson was elected Board President, and the team immediately got to work recruiting additional board members.

With an influx of new board and committee members whose new ideas and energy reinvigorated the team, 2021 proved to be a decisive year. Amidst a global pandemic, the organization commissioned its highest profile mural yet, and along with three other arts organizations from around the city, launched ARtsway, a mural mentorship program for high school students.

Thanks to new programs and partnerships, as well as increased community visibility, the Summer Jam West board approved the name change from Summer Jam West to Hilltop Arts Collective. While the original mission of bringing music and permanent public art to the Hilltop remains unchanged, Hilltop Arts Collective has tasked itself with expanding its public art commissions, providing mentorship opportunities, creating more arts programming, and working to promote the arts on the Hilltop.

"We applaud the efforts of the board and Hilltop community for forming the new Hilltop Arts Collective," said Jami Goldstein, Vice President of the Greater Columbus Arts Council. "Year-long programming and continued mentorship of young people is an incredibly important step toward strengthening the cultural fabric of the neighborhood. Summer Jam West and its founders and board should be very proud of what they've built in the Hilltop."

Summer Jam West, the annual arts & music festival, returns in 2022 following a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19, and will take place on July 9 at Westgate Park. Details for a 2022 mural will be announced in early spring.

"We're excited to make this announcement, and we're ready to get to work as the Hilltop Arts Collective," said Danny Peterson, Hilltop Arts Collective Board President. "The organization has always been greater than the sum of its parts, and we're grateful for the many people and organizations who have helped us in ways big and small."

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The Hilltop Arts Collective is a nonprofit arts organization focused on bringing art to, and promoting the arts within the Hilltop. It's a community-based, all-volunteer team of Hilltop residents and those with strong ties to the Hilltop. Its major programs include Summer Jam West, an annual arts & music festival; For the Common Good, which commissions permanent, public art throughout the Hilltop; and ARtsway, a mural mentorship program for high school students. Learn more at www.hilltoparts.org.