

August 2017

The 3rd Eye Open has been closed for a few years, but a new group of organizers believe that its return will keep the vision clear in New Bedford for years to come.

“We want to make this a staple in the New Bedford concert-slash-festival series,” said Christian Garris, one of the event’s new co-chairs. “Things like Oktoberfest, The (New Bedford) Folk Festival, the Waterfront Concert Series, 50s Night... New Bedford is known for its annual events, and we want it to be here every year. We want people to see that hip-hop is important.”

The free one-day festival, which fuses the different elements of the hip-hop culture including street art, dancing, singing, etc. with a focus on empowering and fostering creativity within the community, will return following a three-year hiatus after a change in leadership. This year, it will be held in Downtown New Bedford on August 19 after 14 years at Buttonwood Park.

“At the park, you were limited to people that knew about the event that would go,” said Garris. “Down here, we’ll get foot traffic or families driving by that will hopefully stop in.”

3rd Eye Unlimited was founded in 1998 by three New Bedford youth who were committed to positively transforming their community by empowering and unleashing the creative capacities of New Bedford’s next generations. Over the years, 3rd Eye Unlimited has provided educational and leadership opportunities for underserved youth by utilizing the positive elements of hip-hop as a medium to spark the attention of youth who are often considered “at-risk.”

Keri Cox, the event’s other co-chair and president of the 3rd Eye Board of Directors, said that young people from around the city have been asking about the Open since it stopped.

“Our dedicated volunteer board and other volunteers were determined to revive it in 2017,” said Cox. “The 3rd Eye Open offers a unique opportunity for New Bedford’s youth. In the current political and economic climate, there is no shortage of reasons to feel angry and frustrated, and it’s easy for young people – especially those from disadvantaged communities – to lose hope. The 3rd Eye Open provides a space for young people to express themselves.”

In the past, the Open has seen performers like New York City legend KRS-1, while also highlighting graffiti artists, breakdancers, and basketball, but this year’s event will have some new features. There will be hip-hop yoga, meditation, and more of a “street-art” presence as opposed to just traditional graffiti. Also added this year is a skateboard jam and an EForAll Entrepreneur Pitch Contest aimed at growing small businesses in the community.

3rd Eye Open veterans Blest Energy, Dirty Durdie, Siahlaw, and Caliph will all return to perform as well.

“I took part in one of the events when I was younger but was never able to really enjoy it,” said volunteer coordinator Selena Deschenes. “Luckily now I can and we can help make it happen.”

Garris added that the event would not have been possible without new partnerships with several local establishments, including the Whaling Museum and the U.S. National Parks Service among others.

“Some of the organizations downtown we’re partnering with aren’t necessarily groups a hip-hop festival would normally

partner with,” he said.

Another one of the Open’s new partners includes A’s Before J’s, a group aimed at emphasizing student success in the classroom. They will help run the 3-on-3 basketball tournament. Manny DeBrito, one of the group’s leaders, said he’s happy to see 3rd EyE back in action.

“I was surprised when the event had ended and we’re excited to be a part of its return and excited for it to be held downtown. I’ve seen a lot of community leaders and programs come together to put together something the city can be proud of. My hope is that the city and its residents embrace its return as a very positive and family friendly event and I see nothing but the potential for growth now and in the future.”

Ben Gilbarg, one of 3rd EyE’s initial founders, will return to help organize the graffiti aspect.

“I’m excited for its return,” he said. “The Open has been something that our community has looked forward to over the years, and I look forward to seeing hope on the faces of those in attendance again.”

Partners for the event include: NB Art Museum/Artworks, Erin Poyant Yoga, A’s Before J’s, Destination New Bedford, Clarity Wellness, Children’s Art Lab, Doodles Creative Session, Solstice Skateboarding, Mastermind Adventures, Lit Radio, City of New Bedford, New Bedford Whaling Museum, Friends of the New Bedford Free Library, New Bedford Department of Parks, Recreation and Beaches, YMCA SOUTHCOAST, Visionary Communications, Life Fundamentals, New Bedford Historical Society, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, UGLY Gallery, EforAll SouthCoast, New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center, SouthCoast Serves, and the Boys & Girls Club of Greater New Bedford.

For more information, a complete list of participants and activities, or to sign up to volunteer for or donate to the event, visit <http://3rdeyeunlimited.org/>. The Open runs from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.