



Circle your calendar for Sept. 29-30 when the official state Texas Arts & Crafts Fair returns to the Texas Hill Country where it was founded in 1972. <https://txartsandcraftsfair.com/>

The Texas State Arts and Crafts Fair will return to the Hill Country next fall on the grounds of the Hill Country Arts Foundation in Ingram, the HCAF board announced Tuesday.

After a hiatus of five years, the official state arts festival will be held Sept. 29-30, 2018, featuring a wide range of arts and crafts by Texas residents, as well as favorite fair food offerings, entertainment and related educational and recreational activities.

HCAF board president Sonny Payne said the arts foundation's 13-acre site on the banks of the Guadalupe River is the ideal location to showcase this major community event.

"The Texas Arts & Crafts Fair is a perfect fit with the core visual arts, performing arts, and educational programs at the Point," Payne said.

James Avery Jewelry will be a "Legacy Sponsor" of the 2018 Fair. Company founder Jim Avery was a board member and supporter of both the arts and crafts fair and the Hill Country Arts Foundation.

The arts foundation last week also received a grant from the Peterson Foundation which will help pay for infrastructure improvements, including parking and electrical upgrades, plus a new phone system that will expand and strengthen Wi-Fi across the grounds.

Kerr County Judge Tom Pollard praised the return of the fair.

"I am excited to see the return of the Texas Arts and Crafts Fair to Kerr County," he said. "This event has always showcased exemplary artists from around the state and we are fortunate to once again have their items on display in the beautiful Hill Country."

The last fair was held in 2013 and its non-profit foundation was forced to declare bankruptcy later that year.

"The end of the long running event was a major loss to the community and the entire state," said HCAF executive director David Howard.

To continue the fair's 41-year-old tradition, the Hill Country Arts Foundation, acquired rights to the fair's name and began plans to relocate the fair to the arts foundation's grounds in Ingram.

“After several years of planning and improving our campus, HCAF is ready to host this large event,” Howard said. “Over the past years we have tested our campus capabilities by hosting smaller events like the Celtic Festival with good results so we now feel this larger event can now finally be brought back to Kerr County,” Howard said.

To help produce the fair in 2018, the HCAF has named a new event director, Wanda Cash, who has deep roots in Kerr County and previously served as president of both the Texas State Arts and Crafts Fair and the Hill Country Arts Foundation.

Cash said she is excited about the opportunity to revive the fair and reestablish it as a recognizable Hill Country brand.

“When any changes occur to an event as beloved as the arts and crafts fair, there is a challenge,” Cash said.

Rebuilding interest and participation will be critical to producing a successful fair. Attracting volunteers will be a top priority, she said.

“But I firmly believe the community will welcome the fair and support it,” said Cash, who will work closely with Rosanne Thrall, HCAF development director.

The idea for the arts and crafts fair originated in 1970, when the Texas Tourist Development Agency, inspired by successful arts fairs in West Virginia and Canada, wanted to establish a similar event in Texas. From a number of competing cities, Kerrville was selected as the host site, and the first arts and crafts fair was held over Memorial Day weekend in 1972, designated as the official state arts and crafts fair by the Texas Legislature.

Two years later, the Texas Arts and Crafts Educational Foundation was formed as a non-profit organization to sponsor the fair.

For 30 years, the fair was held on the Schreiner University campus. In 2004, the fair moved, leasing a seven-acre site leased from the county adjacent to the Hill Country Youth Event Center.

The new arts and crafts fair site at the Hill Country Arts Foundation is nestled under pecan and oak trees, at the convergence of the Guadalupe River and Johnson Creek.

Infrastructure and parking improvements make it a perfect location for an arts festival, HCAF board president Sonny Payne said. And moving the fair to a fall weekend will offer cooler, more welcoming weather.

With the relocation of Stonehenge II to the grounds of the HCAF, tourism has increased to the area and the arts foundation has become a destination for visitors from all across the state and nation. This recognition will aid in the marketing the arts and crafts fair, Cash said.

Admission prices have not been determined, but Cash said the intention is to make the fair family-friendly and affordable.

