

Venus Envy Celebration Expands Beyond Bucktown: April 28 at Bucktown Center for the Arts

Written by

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If you were one of the 1,200 or so people who squeezed into the Bucktown Center of the Arts for Venus Envy either of the past two years, here's some good news: The celebration of women and the arts will be expanding outdoors this year.

(Weather permitting, of course. If the weather's bad, prepare to get squished again.)

The event runs from 6 to 11 p.m. at 225 East Second Street in Davenport. Admission is free.

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Venus Envy will once again feature two stages of live entertainment and an exhibit with more than 50 women artists, along with seven artist demonstrations and an artists' marketplace. This year, the event will be spread out over all four floors of Bucktown and into the neighborhood around the arts center, as well. One of the stages will be outdoors, and each stage has its own theme, with Hera hosting dance and Sophia music. (Full disclosure: My wife will be performing at Venus Envy as part of a duo and with Hersong.)

Venus Envy Chairperson Rachael Mullins said expanding the event was "a response to the flow of the audience in the space." She added that she hopes to have 1,500 people at Venus Envy this year.

If the weather doesn't cooperate, Mullins said, all activities will be moved indoors, and "we might be back to the same tight squeeze we had last year."



Venus Envy originated in St. Louis in 1999 and grew to include three other communities along the Mississippi River. But the leadership provided by the national organization has fallen away, leaving more responsibility for local organizers. Memphis, which has participated in Venus Envy in the past, does not have an event this year, for example.

"We're seeing a lot of changes at the national level," Mullins said. Quad Cities

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organizers developed their own art-exhibit catalog this year, something the national organization had done in the past. "That's an important artifact for the event," Mullins said.

People who attend the Venus Envy event in the Quad Cities probably won't notice the diminished role of the national organization. Mullins said it created an opportunity for stronger local leadership, and "we really ran with it."

The role of the national organization, she said, is turning Venus Envy from a series of local events into a regional/national attraction. "It is the dynamic of the sister cities that can make a national event," Mullins said.

The local expansion of Venus Envy has created other opportunities, Mullins said. Organizers established a property owners' committee to coordinate the outdoor layout and activities, and that has generated new ideas. Bucktown neighbor Paragon Commercial Interiors, for instance, is providing its parking lot for a stage and suggested bringing in a lighting designer for the outdoor elements of the festival.

The group is also expanding its reach beyond this one-night festival. Venus Envy did a presentation for The Women's Connection and also conducted a call for entries to design that organization's Athena Business Women's Award.

Venus Envy Stage Schedule

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Sophia Stone, Pamela Kennerly Ignatius with Carla Hall and Cindy Beal



Hana Singh, The Bushman Dance Ensemble, Groupe Rakset al-Nehri
Catherine Downey, The Bushman Dancers