



EDGEWATER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

MEDIA RELEASE

Women in the Arts Thrive in Edgewater's Diverse, Uniquely Welcoming Environment

Local arts on display at Edgewater Arts Festival – Sept. 24-25

CHICAGO (September 15, 2016) – Edgewater, that deliciously diverse neighborhood bordering Chicago's northern lakefront, has become a haven, a melting pot and a proving ground for a unique sub-set of Chicago artists: women! Women-owned studios, art schools and theater groups abound in Edgewater thanks to a pervasive, welcoming spirit, says Katrina Balog, executive director of the [Edgewater Chamber of Commerce](#). Support of and pride for local art culminates with the [Edgewater Arts Festival](#), located at 1030-1140 W. Granville Avenue on Sept. 24-25 from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.

"The Chamber recognizes that art is a powerful tool for economic development," said Balog. "Art not only brings beauty in our everyday lives; it attracts people to a place." She has seen this happen in Edgewater, as artists have visited the neighborhood, experienced a warm reception and settled in to live, work and teach there. In support of this art community, the Edgewater Chamber has partnered with [Edgewater Artists in Motion](#), an arts-based group responsible for art in storefronts, as well as Edgewater Theatre District committee, which represents 18 live theaters.

"This is a very vibrant community that also seems to be growing in exciting ways," said Rebecca McNealy, owner of [RAM Art Studio](#), which offers art classes and workshops for people of all ages, as well as paint-your-own pottery. McNealy opened the studio in July 2016 after participating in the Edgewater Arts Festival for a couple of years. "One thing that was very important to us when planning our business was that we wanted the chance to be part of a community, as opposed to being in a shopping center. We have felt very welcome in this community, and I can only imagine other artists have as well."

"It seems to me that Edgewater is the jewel of Chicago at the moment," said B Djokanovic, owner of [Aartwerk Studio](#). "It is well positioned and fast developing area, but it is still affordable. The Edgewater community is tremendously supportive!" Aartwerk is both serious and whimsical, a studio that encourages art discovery and exploration in its BYO art courses. "We have really hard-working people to thank: Edgewater Chamber of Commerce staff, the Alderman's office and, of course, Rae Ann Cercle, the person who started Edgewater Art Festival and Artists in Motion."

Much credit is given to Cercle for initiating arts awareness and support in Edgewater. "I think that with Rae Ann's initiatives, people started perceiving Edgewater as a neighborhood growing

into an arts-oriented community,” said Djokanovic. “Support and networking provided from active members of the community are helping this vision grow.” She attested that arts-related businesses such as Aartwerk, RAM Studio and the [Chicago Mosaic School](#) liked the local vibe and chose to join the environment.

“The diversity of Edgewater’s Kenmore-Winthrop strip is what attracted me to the neighborhood, along with the bike path and proximity to the Lake,” said Tricia Van Eck, founder of [6018North](#), an artist-centered venue for innovative art and culture. A former curator at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, Van Eck grew up on Chicago’s southwest side, where there was no support of the arts; she has a deep appreciation for the support that the arts community receives in Edgewater. “The Alderman’s office works very hard to bring theatre and arts organizers together to brainstorm and to create plans for working together. They work in tandem on big thinking as well as more ‘get-it-done’ details,” she noted.

The way Edgewater embraces diversity, inclusion and empowerment has also been a powerful force behind the neighborhood’s live theaters. Julie Proudfoot is founder and executive artistic director of [Artemisia](#), a female-driven theater company that challenges its audiences to see women in a new light. “As a woman leader in the arts, the community has embraced my work, celebrated our unique mission and programming, and lent support in key ways that were and continue to be critical to our success,” she said. “The passion for art in Edgewater is vital, and many people contribute to that vitality. The spirit of inclusion and mutual support makes Edgewater a very special place to create and perform theater in Chicago.”

The Edgewater Arts Festival combines big city art with a contagious neighborhood street fair, showcasing visual arts, performing arts, food vendors, children’s activities and more. For complete details, visit <http://www.edgewaterartists.com/edgewater-arts-festival.html>.

For more information about the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce, visit <http://www.edgewater.org/>.

About the Edgewater Chamber of Commerce

The Edgewater Chamber of Commerce creates and supports a thriving business environment, contributing to a vibrant Edgewater community. We are a community of readers, thinkers, dreamers and doers. We are constantly evolving and looking at new ways of doing things to help our businesses and community grow. We host events and workshops, connect our businesses and residents, make our public way look beautiful and assist our businesses in any way they need.

#

CONTACT:

Lisa Ripson
Ripson Communications
Lisa.ripson@ripsoncommunications.com
(312) 952-7394 (m)
Twitter: @LisaRipson

Chris Comes
Ripson Communications
Chris.comes@ripsoncommunications.com
(312) 282-0539 (m)
Twitter: @ChrisComes