

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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A celebration to recognize Juneteenth will be held in Bandera at the Bertha Tryon/Hendrick Arnold Black Cemetery on Saturday, June 15th at 11:00 am. The cemetery is located on old Medina Highway right off of Highway 16. Traditionally a Texas holiday, this year marks the third anniversary of Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday and the third annual Bandera celebration.

The day commemorates the date of June 19, 1865 when Union Army General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston and announced General Order No. 3 proclaiming that all enslaved people were now free in Texas, the last state of the Confederacy with institutional slavery. The day of emancipation for Texas slaves became an annual celebration known as Juneteenth. As African-Americans moved from Texas to other parts of the country, they brought their tradition of celebrating Juneteenth with them and the holiday went from a regional tradition to a national one. The day was recognized as a federal holiday on June 17, 2021, when President Joseph Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law, becoming the first new federal holiday since Martin Luther King Jr. Day was adopted in 1983.

This year's celebration in Bandera is being hosted by the Bandera County Historical Commission, the Frontier Times Museum and the Silver Sage Resource Center. Mayor Rebeca Gibson, a member of the Juneteenth Planning Committee, will open the event. A wreath will be placed at the cemetery's gate and there will be a traditional reading of the Emancipation Proclamation. A popular addition from last year's celebration, the San Antonio Mass Gospel Choir, under the direction of Dr. James Wilcox, will again join the festivities. San Antonio performance poet, DaRell Pittman, will do an original poetry reading and Houston resident Gayle Waden will sing a moving selection of songs acapella.

A new event for this year's celebration was an essay contest that was opened to Bandera Middle and High School students. Abigail Sizemore, a ninth grader from Bandera High School, won this year with an essay on the importance of traditions in our culture and history. A reading of the essay will be done during the program.

To honor Juneteenth, the Bandera Kronkosky Public Library has created a book display of books related to Juneteenth and will have a special Juneteenth Story Time for children. The Story Time will be videotaped and aired on their social media pages.

Traditionally, woman wore white in early celebrations of Juneteenth. White dresses and clothing were reserved for the most special of occasions. This year, attendees are encouraged to wear white and will be asked to participant in placing a red flower on each marked grave in the cemetery after the ceremony.

After the ceremony, a community picnic will be set up for participants to enjoy on the cemetery grounds, much like the early Juneteenth celebrations that were held throughout Texas. Attendees are encouraged to bring a dessert and a lawn chair. This event is free and open to all who would like to commemorate this special day in our country's history. For more information, please call the Frontier Times Museum at 830-796-3864.
