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A Seat at the Table to feature the Justice Arts Coalition

Conversation to highlight the role art plays on incarcerated people and the re-entry process

(Des Moines, IA) – The Des Moines Arts Festival’s next edition of A Seat at the Table will evaluate the important role art plays in healing and empowering people who are incarcerated, as well as how art influences the re-entry process. The conversation is to be held on Tuesday, August 9 at 11:30 a.m. on Zoom. The session panelists include Wendy Jason, Justice Arts Coalition founder and co-director, and artists Carole Alden and Brett Gonzalez. Kate Hightshoe facilitates A Seat at the Table. Registration is free and required. Click [here](#) to register.

The Justice Arts Coalition (JAC) is a national 501c3 organization uniting teaching artists, arts advocates, and artists who are or have been incarcerated and their allies. Through the sharing of resources, stories, and learning opportunities, JAC is committed to increasing opportunities for creative expression in carceral settings, amplifying the voices of those most impacted by mass incarceration, and shaping public dialogue around the intersection of the arts and justice.

Artist Carole Alden worked in clay and bronze before shifting to fibers. She was incarcerated in 2006 for an act committed in self-defense after severe domestic violence. She served 13 years in prison, where she created a body of work reflecting experiences of women dealing with domestic violence and the legal system. After her release in 2019, Alden outlined a vision to create an art studio that will serve as a retreat space and will house therapeutic sculpture workshops.

Brett Gonzalez is an artist currently incarcerated in a federal facility in Ft. Worth, Texas. When first imprisoned, a friend encouraged expression through drawing as a coping mechanism. Inspired by this new sense of empowerment, he enrolled in the institution’s Hobby Craft program where he received a surprisingly thorough art education from another inmate. Gonzalez will participate in the session over the phone. He currently serves as the Chair for JAC.

The final 2022 A Seat at the Table is scheduled for November 3. It will continue a conversation from 2021 on the Native American arts experience and will highlight how music, dance and regalia play a critical role in telling the Native American Story. Registration is currently available [here](#).

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About the **Des Moines Arts Festival**. The Des Moines Arts Festival® is committed to strengthening a vibrant and creative community. Dedicated to the principles of collaboration and creative expression, Des Moines Arts Festival inspires engagement with the arts, fosters and celebrates inclusion, values professionalism and quality, and champions new and emerging ideas.

The Des Moines Arts Festival produces an annual outdoor festival celebrating arts and culture, provides programming and support to artists and arts organizations, advocates for a “arts first” leadership model, and inspires individuals to find their creative voice.

The mission of the Des Moines Arts Festival is to Impact Lives through the Arts.

About A Seat at the Table. A Seat at the Table is an intentional effort to elevate cultural equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Central Iowa arts and culture community. The Des Moines Arts Festival hosts the conversations to enable creatives to find their "seat at the table." Each gathering includes community partners sharing how they are working towards cultural equity and how we, as a community, can collaborate to elevate the arts.

About Kate Hightshoe. Kate Hightshoe has a proven track record in implementing cultural change management strategies at all organization levels – organizational compliance and enterprise risk management and mitigation - and community building, development, and engagement. Her areas of expertise include the strategic building of highly functioning teams and partnerships designed to support business objectives and sustainability - convening conversations and opportunities for innovation and creative business - and tying equity, inclusion, diversity and accessibility values and initiatives to corporate strategy that can further assist the organization in achieving key objectives. Kate has her BA in Oboe Performance and minor in Music Composition from the University of Missouri Kansas City Conservatory of Music and Interdisciplinary Masters: American Culture, American History, American Music. Kate is the immediate past Chair of the Inclusion Council for the Greater Des Moines Partnership, serves on The Des Moines Symphony EDI Committee, the Board of Directors for the Des Moines Art Center, and the Executive Board of Directors for BRAVO Des Moines.

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