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# Music City Freedom Festival to provide support for local businesses while celebrating Juneteenth

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Colette Shumate wants to quit her day job. The Music City Freedom Festival could help her do just that.

Mike Harris and Julius Jackson founded the Music City Freedom Festival not only to celebrate Juneteenth, but also to bring awareness and provide support to small, local businesses, the majority of which are Black-owned businesses.



COURTESY OF COLETTE SHUMATE

Colette Shumate is the owner of Pink Suga Creations, a local business that sells organic body products.

One of these businesses is Shumate's Pink Suga Creations, which sells organic body products such as scrubs, sprays and face masks.

Shumate found out about the Music City Freedom Festival through another vendor. Shumate said she usually sets up booths at markets in the Nashville area but is excited to be working a festival instead.

"A festival is different," Shumate said. "It brings a larger crowd."

Pink Suga Creations currently receives an average of 100 sales each month.

One of Shumate's long-term goals is to increase her online orders, which she hopes the festival can help her accomplish.

If she can do this, Shumate will eventually be able to quit her 9-to-5 at a local medical company in order to focus her attention entirely on Pink Suga Creations.

"As a vendor, as a woman, as a Black woman, [the Music City Freedom Festival] is just something wonderful," Shumate said. "I have something to offer, and I put a lot of love and energy into my products, and people love it and I love it and that's just made me keep going forward and working harder to achieve what I have."

The festival will be held from noon to 6 p.m. on June 19 at Hadley Park and is free to the public.

"My hope is that people enjoy the experience and that we provide not only a sense of community, a sense of family, for that six hours," Harris said. "But we educate people on what Juneteenth is and also that we connect people to different services and different things that they may need."

When Harris and Jackson held the first annual Music City Freedom Festival in 2019, they had only 40 vendors. By the end of the day, the festival had hosted 3,000 attendees, and many vendors had sold out.

Interest in the festival has increased despite it being canceled last year because of the Covid-19 pandemic. So far, the festival has 145 local businesses registered to sell a wide variety of products, such as clothing, art and books.

Throughout the event, eight food trucks and carts will sell food ranging from soul food to shaved ice and 15 family-friendly musical acts will take the stage, including Harris himself, who will be DJing.

Notable community leaders and nonprofits in the Nashville area will be speaking during the event as well.

The Nashville Freedom School Partnership is a nonprofit that holds literacy programs for kids K-8 in order to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, according to Ashiya Swan, the executive director of the organization.

Swan and other members of the Nashville Freedom School Partnership will be at the event to raise awareness about its six-week summer program beginning on June 14.

"We hope to just really connect with the community," Swan said.

Shumate said she's excited for the chance to interact with members of the community as well, to give Pink Suga Creations a "broader clientele" so that one day, it'll be the only business she works at.

"If you don't put the hard work in, then you won't see the outcome," Shumate said. "And that's what I'm doing. I'm putting in the hard work."