LEAF Celebrates 25 Years & Invites Asheville to Explore the World at New Global Arts Center

December 20, 2019 | Asheville, NC —

LEAF Community Arts is celebrating 25 years of global music and connecting cultures. “Since 1995, LEAF’s intention was to create experiences that connect people to global cultures and enrich lives. Thanks to wonderful supporters, partners, teaching artists and friends, that intention continues to be realized.” –Jennifer Pickering, LEAF Founder & Executive Director.

What began as an immersive biannual festival experience has since evolved into a full-spectrum global arts non-profit organization providing cultural arts education to over 12,000 youth each year in WNC while supporting the preservation of timeless traditions in 10 countries worldwide.

“The quintessential importance of LEAF is bringing people together... And the shortest distance between two people is a story, a song or a dance”. ~Masankho Banda of Malawi, 18 yr LEAFer

It is with 25 years of Gratitude, that LEAF is thrilled to announce LEAF Global Arts in Downtown Asheville to open February 14, 2020. LEAF Global Arts invites you to explore the world through immersive music & art experiences and cultural connections, fostering global citizenship and opening pathways of understanding... For ALL.

The 3,300 ft² space will bring the different elements of LEAF under one roof and feature an interactive world map where visitors can explore a wide range of cultural art forms, an international immersion room and virtual reality mini theater that will transport visitors across the globe through a sensory experience, a global sound underground to encourage experimentation with unique musical instruments from around the world, an intimate performance stage and interactive artist workstations.

Located in the historic Club Del Cardo building on “The Block”, which has been brought to new life by its owner Eagle Market Streets Development Corporation in partnership with Mountain Housing Opportunities, LEAF Global Arts has committed to honoring the rich history of the area by dedicating a space for elders to share stories and the local community to cultivate connections. It is LEAF’s hope that anyone experiencing LEAF Global Arts leaves feeling more connected to the world, their community and themselves.

To solidify this new chapter, LEAF is evolving the name from LEAF Community Arts to LEAF Global Arts. The name change marks the organizational growth from a local music festival to a Global non-profit organization with partners, programs and impact across the world. LEAF Global Arts is a natural, yet transformative step for LEAF, one that we are building with the intention of connecting communities to the larger world.
Community and Visitor Support Makes LEAF Global Arts Possible

LEAF is proud to have community members, new and old, coming together to help make LEAF Global Arts a reality. With a pivotal grant of $705,000 from the Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority’s Tourism Product Development Fund (TPDF), which comes from a portion of the occupancy tax paid by people who stay overnight in commercial lodging facilities in Buncombe County, LEAF is also committed to being a touchstone for regional, national and international tourist markets seeking a multi-generational culturally rich experience, and a synergistic complement to life-enriching experiences already offered in Asheville.

“The Buncombe County TDA is proud to have played a key role in helping to bring the LEAF Global Arts center to fruition, which will serve as a cornerstone in the continued rebirth of the city’s historical African-American business district known as The Block. This project will elevate and greatly diversify Asheville’s already rich arts and cultural traditions,” said BCTDA Chair Gary Froeba. “We congratulate LEAF for this milestone and thank this energetic, vibrant group for allowing us to partner with them.”

Also helping LEAF begin this new chapter are Founding Partners: Bank of America Foundation, Dan Lucas Memorial Fund, Echo Mountain Recording Studio, the Gradison Family Foundation, Putumayo World Music, Sunnyside Trading Company, and Togar Rugs. These community members and partners are dedicated to LEAF’s mission and have committed to the growth of the organization and its impact.

From its first festival in 1995 to its 50th Festival celebration next May, LEAF has been connecting us to ourselves, each other and the world for 25 years.

IMPORTANT UPCOMING DATES

LEAF Global Arts Grand Opening: Valentines Weekend, 2020

LEAF’s 50th Festival & 25th Anniversary Celebration: May 14-17, 2020

NOTE: Festival goers can begin purchasing tickets on 01/01/20 and expect a grand celebration to actualize what the festival has meant to the WNC community since 1995 by featuring a dynamic line-up and schedule of activities to usher in the next phase of what is to come.

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