

# Juneteenth festivities blend old and new

**BY CINDE INGRAM**  
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

**HIGH POINT** — The public is invited to observe Juneteenth on Saturday and to join a Walk for Solidarity to Washington Street, where they can join a Father's Day Festival on Sunday afternoon.

Saturday is the 156th anniversary of Juneteenth, also known as "Freedom Day" or "Emancipation Day," the date in 1865 when Union soldiers arrived

in Galveston, Texas, with word that slavery had been abolished two years earlier.

High Point's Juneteenth weekend events will begin quietly at 10 a.m. Saturday with the Juneteenth African American History Walking Tour at Oakwood Cemetery. Phyllis Bridges, a local historian and artist, will lead attendees from the cemetery's 512 Steele St. entrance

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# FESTIVITIES

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on a tour with stories of early Black settlers who contributed to the settlement and growth of High Point.

Later Saturday, the city's first HomeGrown Juneteenth will infuse energy, food and music into a free 2-6 p.m. event at Sabrina's Art Gallery, 112 S. Main St. Pure Fiyah Reggae Band and Chris Gregory (aka DJ MC) will provide musical entertainment as families shop local Black-owned vendors, said Bryon Stricklin, founder and CEO of The MIND (Moving In a New Direction) Group.

"In short, the purpose of this event is to celebrate Black excellence and bring more awareness of African American culture," Stricklin said. "Too many times, we overlook the contributions of African Americans and forget that this country was built largely on the backs of slaves. As horrific as that sounds, the truth of the matter is that Juneteenth is a celebration of independence for all Americans, particularly those of African descent."

On Sunday, Uniting Black Men for Change will present its inaugural Step Up, Step Out, Step In Walk of Solidarity, which will end at the site of the Father's Day Festival. Designed to change the perception of Black men in society, the walk and festival was organized to bring together people from the community, celebrate fathers and show that Black men are neighbors and fellow citizens, not threats.

Organizations and individuals wishing to participate in the walk are asked to meet at 1 p.m. at Morehead Recreation Center, 101 Price St. The walk to the historic Washington Street business district will

start shortly after, with the festival beginning at 2 p.m.

Uniting Black Men for Change asks all men who participate to wear suits, said Tony Graham, one of the co-organizers.

"When you see men in suits, you see professionals," Graham said. "You see yourself or who you aspire to be. Our aim is to have society view our Black males in the same way. We want to change the stigmas and stereotypes while bringing communities together."

Graham joined Gregg Commander and Lovelle McMichael as co-founders of Uniting Black Men for Change in late 2020 and early 2021 with a goal of guiding and grooming men and thus their families into becoming active, productive neighbors within the communities of which they live, work, worship and frequent.

Although the focus will be on Black men, organizers hope to draw people from all races and ethnic groups, McMichael said.

Participants who are unable to join the walk are invited to meet at the Washington Street business district, where the Father's Day Festival will offer speakers, food trucks, various vendors, giveaways, live entertainment and family-oriented events. The event is expected to end at 7 p.m.

Shuttles will be available for taking people back to their cars.

Uniting Black Men for Change has gathered several dozen suits, shirts and ties to accommodate men in need, McMichael said. Anyone interested in becoming a vendor or sponsor should contact Uniting Black Men for Change at [unitingblackmen@gmail.com](mailto:unitingblackmen@gmail.com) for additional information.

[cigram@hpenews.com](mailto:cigram@hpenews.com) | 336-888-3534 | @HPEcinda