



NEWS RELEASE

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Band Festival Cancelled – First Time Since WWII

MASON CITY, IA – The Chamber of Commerce announces the cancellation of the 2020 ***North Iowa Band Festival***, scheduled for May 21-25. The festival, Mason City's signature event which serves as the unofficial kick-off to the summer season, brings thousands of music lovers to the community and provides a healthy economic boost.

The Chamber of Commerce board of directors voted this morning to cancel the festival and all related activities due to public health concerns posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The North Iowa Band Festival Committee met Friday and sent its recommendation to the Chamber board. This year would've marked the 82nd celebration.

All aspects of the festival have been cancelled, including:

- Parade and High School Marching Band Competition
- Main stage entertainment and other performances
- Carnival
- Marketplace
- Stu Nevermann Memorial Run
- Band Festival Royalty

While festival officials considered postponement, due to the uncertainty of resuming crowd activities they determined cancellation as the only safe option. "Certainly, this is a disappointment," said Chamber President Robin Anderson. "But in the larger scope, this cancellation is nothing compared to what local businesses, employees, and essential workers are going through. A tradition as strong as the Band Festival will survive, and so will our region. We'll get through this together."

Despite the festival's cancellation, corporate sponsors are standing firmly behind this North Iowa tradition. Marti Rodamaker, President & CEO of First Citizens Bank, said "Sadly, this is a sign of the times. However, it doesn't dampen our enthusiasm for this event, and we are pleased to maintain our financial sponsorship to assist with expenses that have already been incurred. We know the festival will be back bigger and better next year."

Tyler Kerr, plant manager at REG-Mason City, echoed those thoughts. "Even though the festival has been cancelled for Memorial Day weekend, we're maintaining our financial commitment with the hope we can bring the community together later this year to celebrate our unity and resilience."

In addition, Clear Lake Bank & Trust President Paul Stevenson stated, "While the Band Festival may be cancelled this year, we remain committed in our support of this event and others as we all work together to see our communities emerge from this health crisis stronger than we entered it."

Throughout its rich history, the only time the festival has been suspended was 1943-45, in the midst of World War II. Festival archives from 1943 noted, "It is agreed that difficulties of transportation alone make postponement of this event necessary. Many band masters have left to serve, and buses can no longer be used for transportation. But just wait till the year of Victory Celebration, and you'll see a festival which will be bigger and better than ever." Indeed, when the North Iowa Band Festival was revived in 1946, it was expanded to five days—a tradition that continues today.

Band festival committee members, who had extended an invitation to Hugh Jackman to serve as this year's Grand Marshal, continue their campaign to attract the actor to visit Mason City. Jackman will star as Professor Harold Hill in the Broadway revival of "The Music Man" later this year. If efforts are successful and Jackman agrees to a visit when the pandemic threat subsides, a mini-festival will be staged by the committee.

The North Iowa Band Festival Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit charitable organization with a mission to provide a weekend of wholesome family entertainment at little or no cost to the family; to promote and celebrate the rich musical heritage of North Iowa; and to provide an atmosphere which showcases young musicians who are becoming a part of that heritage.

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