



For Immediate Release

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FORT SMITH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL WELCOMES UNITED NATIONS ART AMBASSADOR, IBIYINKA ALAO, TO FORT SMITH

Festival Brings Nations and Neighbors Together

FORT SMITH, Ark., June 17, 2021: The Fort Smith International Film Festival welcomed United Nations Art Ambassador Ibiyinka Alao to a press conference on Thursday announcing the festival's growing economic and artistic collaboration with local artists and international neighbors.

"Fort Smith has always been an international city in terms of industry, culture, and art. With 396 film submissions from 43 different countries, we are solidifying our rightful place on the world stage as the River Valley showcases diverse voices and incredible talents," said Dr. Brandon Chase Goldsmith, Executive Director of the Fort Smith International Film Festival.

Additional conference attendees included Arvest Bank President, Roger Holroyd; Vice President of Marketing for Arvest Bank, Beth Presley; Fort Smith International Film Festival Artistic Director, Jennifer Burchett; Cherokee Nation Film Office Director, Jennifer Loren; Local artist and festival poster designer, J.K. Burchett; and History and Preservation Officer for the Cherokee Nation, Catherine Foreman Gray. Arvest Bank and 906 Cigar and Cocktail Lounge are Presenting Sponsors of the Festival. The Cherokee Nation Film Office is a Category Sponsor.

After speakers discussed the importance of community collaboration and the arts for professional development and personal growth, Ambassador Alao and artist J.K. Burchett revealed the inaugural festival poster.

"The arts open people's hearts in a way that mere articulation cannot. Because I am responsible for peace building, I see that the arts allow us to think in a different plane, and helps people think beyond present problems," said Ibiyinka Alao, United Nations Arts Ambassador.

The festival poster, which features an original painting of Cherokee Nation History and Preservation Officer, Catherine Gray Foreman, symbolizes the festival's commitment to building cultural and economic bridges through the arts.

"This poster represents the essence of this film festival; our commitment to international development, strengthening the local economy via the arts, and personal enrichment through cultural exploration," said Jennifer Burchett, Artistic Director.

Tickets are on sale now for the Fort Smith International Film Festival, which takes place August 13-14 in downtown Fort Smith. For more information, please visit FortSmithFilm.com.

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