



Harlem Arts Festival Returns to Marcus Garvey Park for Second Year



By **Jeff Mays** on June 28, 2013 10:20am | Updated on June 28, 2013 10:20am

[@JeffCMays](#)



HARLEM — After living in Harlem for a couple of years, members of the dance collective MADArt Creative Dancers haven't had a chance to perform in their own neighborhood.

"I don't think I've ever performed uptown. Most of my performances have been in Brooklyn," said Kaylin Carlucci, 23, a member of the group.

That'll change this weekend when the group makes its uptown debut at the second annual [Harlem Arts Festival](#) at Marcus Garvey Park this Saturday and Sunday.

"It's opening new doors. There were less opportunities to perform uptown and this festival is adding those opportunities for artists," said Lauren Camp, 26, the choreographer for the group that likes to incorporate different aspects of visual art into its pieces.

Opening the doors for artists is what festival founders J.J. El-Far, Chelsea Goding and Neal Ludevig had in mind when they [launched the free festival last year](#).

It went better than expected. More than 1,000 people showed up over the course of two days to see 33 artists perform on two different stages.

"I'm amazed how many people who were here said, 'I want to be at the festival and I want to volunteer next year!'" Ludevig said. "The response from the community this year was great. The biggest question we had was how come I didn't know about this."

As with launching any event, there were some hard lessons to be learned. Last year's festival was held on Friday and Saturday. As it turned out, Friday was not the best day to attract families to the festival.

It has since been moved to Saturday and Sunday.

The events also started earlier in the day, which the organizers think hurt attendance. This year, the festivities will start at 3 p.m. and run until 8 p.m.

The programming has also been more consolidated with both stages running at the same time.

And the food offerings have been upgraded. Four food trucks including Phil's Steaks, Fishing Shrimp and Snap Hot Dogs will be on the scene.

There will also be a kids' corner for arts and crafts and other activities, such as face painting and a gallery walk where artists will display their work.

Performers this year once again span the creative spectrum and include Dance Harlem, composed of multiple uptown dance groups, and the theater group [Collective Colour](#). Spoken word artist [Najee Omar](#) will perform as well as [The Brandee Younger Jazz Harp Quartet](#), who could touch on anything from hip-hop to classical music.

There were double the number of applications for performers this year than last. Sponsorships and partnerships have also increased for this year's event.

Santino Lo, 24, creative director for MADArt Creative Dancers, isn't surprised.

"It's nice to see the cultural life of the neighborhood take off," he said.

Ludevig said the festival's organizers are excited for the future.

"Last year we were figuring out whether or not we could pull this off but now there's no question the demand is there," he said. "You can bet your bottom dollar we will do this next year and the year after that. Persistence is the key."

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