

## **(UMOJA FESTIVAL LOGO)**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **ROSE ROYCE, SOS BAND, GLEN JONES HEADLINE CITY OF PORTSMOUTH'S 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL UMOJA FESTIVAL**

*The Manhattans, Keith Sweat also featured in celebration Aug. 3-5*

(PORTSMOUTH, VA) – National artists Rose Royce, The SOS Band and Glenn Jones will kick off the 17<sup>th</sup> annual Umoja Festival at the NTELOS Festival Park at 8 p.m. Friday, Aug. 3.

R&B vocal groups The Manhattans, featuring Gerald Austin and Blue Lovitt; Keith Sweat; and a special guest will perform at 7:30 p.m. Saturday at The City of Portsmouth's three-day event, celebrating African-American culture and heritage. Tickets for all performances are available by phone and online from TicketMaster and at the NTELOS Pavilion box office.

Umoja (pronounced you-moe-ja) is a Swahili word meaning "unity" and is the first principle of Kwanzaa. The festival features national and local entertainment, a festival parade, educational exhibits, trolley tours, children's village, ethnic foods and African dancers.

Major sponsors include Cox Communications, Clear Channel Communications, The Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel and Waterfront Conference Center and Optima Family Care.

Other musical entertainment includes the Gospel & Latin Music Revue with a featured national recording artist and Hampton Roads gospel choirs, Latin groups and performers at 1 p.m. Sunday. Local artists, including RaJazz, Against All Odds and Sweet Papa Blues, will perform throughout the festival.

Prior to the official start of the festival, *New York Times* best-selling author and Portsmouth native Nathan McCall will lead a community forum called “Parenting Teens and Tweens Today” at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 1 in City Council Chambers.

For the first time, the festival will host a golf tournament at Bide-A-Wee Golf Course with a shotgun start at 8 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 2. Cost is \$300 per team or \$80 per individual. Registration is due July 20. For more information, download a form at [www.portsmouthva.gov/umojafest](http://www.portsmouthva.gov/umojafest).

At 10 a.m. Friday the City of Portsmouth will celebrate its first Walk of Fame inductees at NTELOS Pavilion. R&B pioneer Ruth Brown and rock and roll star Bill Deal of Bill Deal and the Rhondels fame, both Portsmouth natives, along with R&B singer Gerald Levert and “Godfather of Soul” James Brown, will be honored at an invitation-only reception. The performers will be memorialized with permanent stars embedded in the sidewalk.

Another community event, a two-mile Victory Walk, will be sponsored by the Hampton Roads Chapter of the Virginia Breast Cancer Foundation at 9 a.m. Saturday. The walk will begin at NTELOS Pavilion and wind along the waterfront. Registration is \$10 before July 28<sup>th</sup> or \$15 at the event. For more information or to register call 1-

(800)-345-8223 or visit [www.vbef.org](http://www.vbef.org). Checks made out to Hampton Roads Chapter of VBCF may be mailed to P.O. Box 3105, Portsmouth, VA, 23701.

The festival officially begins at 5:15 p.m. Friday at the NTELOS Pavilion with a traditional African drum call, a ceremonial procession led by Portsmouth dignitaries and civic leaders, and the blessing of the elders. Participants wear African attire and masks, and carry streamers and noisemakers to mark the grand celebration. All are facets of ancient African tribal cultures, customs and traditions.

The festival continues in downtown Portsmouth and at the NTELOS Pavilion through Saturday and Sunday, with children's activities and an African marketplace with traditional African foods and crafts. Throughout the festival weekend, Portsmouth will resemble its sister city of Eldoret, Kenya.

Another highlight will be the historic trolley tours of Olde Towne Portsmouth. African American re-enactors in period costume will board the trolley at designated stops and share stories of people from the city's past.

Music will fill the air everywhere, with national and local artists performing jazz, reggae, gospel and R&B. There will be storytelling for children and adults and educational exhibits.

More than 25,000 people are expected to attend the festival over the three days, making Umoja one of the largest events in Virginia celebrating African American heritage.

For more information, call (757)-393-8481 or visit the Web site at [www.portsmouthva.gov/umojafest](http://www.portsmouthva.gov/umojafest).