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Festival to include live music, fermented foods

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Artist Jennifer Power works on a microbe-themed mural next to Fourth Street Studios Thursday morning. The artists will also be working on their project during the Fermentation Festival on Saturday evening.

Courtesy photo

September weekends in Laramie are a time for outdoor live music, dancing in the street and enjoying that perfect end-of-summer weather that rolls into the Gem City right about now.

This year, the Fermentation Festival has expanded its annual event to include music, drinks and food from 3-8 p.m. Saturday on Fourth Street between Grand Avenue and Garfield Street. Vendors will have different types of fermented foods and beverages among their offerings, such as bread, yogurt, cheese

and, yes, beer.

“We’re making a microbe menu,” said organizer Rene Williams. “We’re trying to make it really fun way to eat art.”

Proceeds from the festival will benefit Science Loves Art and its mission to distribute art kits to kids across Wyoming.

“This is our big fundraiser for the year,” said Williams, who is also the CEO of Science Loves Art.

Past Fermentation Festivals have been indoor affairs in Williams’ Fourth Street Studios, but she decided to move things outdoors this year. Because other community events are laying low, she expanded hers to fill the void.

“We got the idea of doing something outside that would get the community together in a safe way,” she said.

Williams worked with local health officials to design the event. Attendance is limited to 250 people, who will need tickets to get in. Tickets are available online or at the door for a donation of any amount. Masks will be required for people standing in line to order food. Otherwise, attendees can spread out to enjoy the music.

“This is a place for people to be safe and have fun,” she said.

The musical line-up includes Cousin Flamingo, Mantisgrove and Hunter Hicks playing from 3:30-7:30 p.m. During the event, Fourth Street will be closed to vehicle traffic from Grand Avenue to Garfield Street.

Also during the festival, several local artists will be working on a mural on the fence along the north side of the Fourth Street Studios property. Emma Adams, Amanda Kuster, Jennifer Power and Adam Skadsen will be painting the microbe-themed mural. They were selected in collaboration with Laramie Public Art Coalition.

Science Loves Art was created in 2017 as part of grant from the National Science Foundation with the aim of using art as an outreach tool to communicate scientific research. The purpose of the grant is to study the microbial array across Wyoming, thus Science Loves Art is using microbes as its artistic inspiration.

“For the last three years, we’ve been using the microbe link to art through art kits that we’ve been creating,” she said.

Microbes perform many functions critical to healthy air, water, soil and even humans, such as decomposition and fermentation.

Last year, Science Loves Art distributed 2,500 art kits to Wyoming kids, with a focus on rural and isolated areas. This year, Williams is hoping to create and distribute 4,000 kits.

“We’ve got such a high demand this year,” she said.

Another long-standing local event, the NU2U Street Dance and Costume Party, would have taken place this weekend as well. But organizers Chelsea and Rob Harder decided to put off the 10th-anniversary edition until next year.

“We’ll bring it back when it makes sense,” Chelsea Harder said.

NU2U donates proceeds from that event to a local nonprofit. Harder said they will instead run an in-store fundraiser through the month of September, with a beneficiary to be determined.

“(Customers) will have the opportunity at checkout out to do a small donation with their purchase,” she said.

If You Go

What: Fermentation Festival

When: 3-8 p.m. Saturday

Where: Fourth Street between Grand Avenue and Garfield Street

How much: Tickets available by donation

More info: [fermentationfestival.eventbrite.com](https://www.fermentationfestival.eventbrite.com)