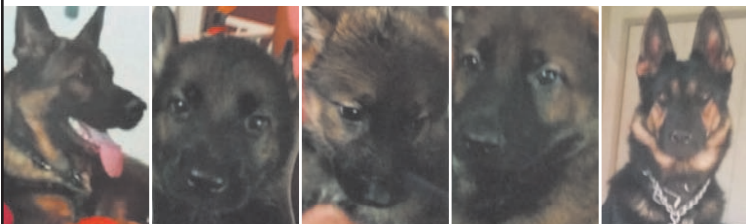


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## Socially-distancing the sidewalks

Pandemic-related adjustments for 30th edition of *Chalk it Up!*

BY LINDSAY OXFORD / [lindsayo@newsreview.com](mailto:lindsayo@newsreview.com)

This year's Chalk It Up! Music and Arts Festival, Sacramento's annual Labor Day celebration, was meant to be even larger than usual, a 30th birthday party. On any normal Labor Day weekend, artists, bands and businesses from all over the region would be filling Midtown Sacramento's Fremont Park for three days of creating astounding chalk-art in real time.

But with the pandemic still a health hazard, it would be impossible to enforce six-foot social distancing between artists and the 20,000 weekend visitors for a typical Chalk It Up! "Obviously this has been a big curveball for us this year," says John Nelson, Chalk It Up!'s media director.

The festival is rolling with the punches, rebranding as Chalk It Up! Around the Town. Instead of 200 artists filling every square of pavement around Fremont Park, approximately 60 chalk artists will be dispersed throughout the city—with some in outlying areas, as well. An interactive map at [chalkitup.org](http://chalkitup.org) allows people to find the artwork, often at businesses sponsoring the artist.

Chalk It Up! has faced curveballs before. Jerry Perry, promoter and Sacramento music scene linchpin for decades, had been its driving force for 15 years. But his stroke two years ago necessitated a quick shift; the event, while always relying on a large team of volunteers, saw the rest of the Perry family and many of those volunteers taking over Jerry's duties. Linda Perry, Jerry's wife, sits on the nonprofit's board, and son Eli Perry has been booking the bands since 2018.

For this year, Eli, along with Eric Bianchi, longtime Chalk It Up! music collaborator, have arranged for a nightly multi-platform live-stream of pre-recorded sets by local bands, including Kevin and Allyson Seconds, Kepi Ghoulie, Sea of Bees, Dog Party, and Honyock.

The coronavirus "may have thrown a monkey wrench in our plans this year," Perry says. "[B]ut we're still here putting in hard work to make something we hope captures the passion that we've always stood for."



This familiar scene from last year's Chalk It Up! in Midtown's Fremont Park will be replaced this year with sidewalk chalk art throughout the city.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CHALK IT UP! MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL

Perry and Bianchi have booked bands that not only have strong fan bases, but that also understand Chalk It Up!'s mission: the net proceeds provide grants to Sacramento youth arts education.

Gwendolyn and Lucy Giles, the sisters who make up Dog Party, are well aware of the importance of youth arts programs. "I fell in love with playing music when I was in elementary school," Gwendolyn says.

"[A]ccessibility to creative outlets at that age made me was tremendously essential in developing who I am."

Lucy echoes that sentiment: "We are beyond honored and stoked to be performing for Chalk It Up! and supporting [the] future of the arts for Sacramento."

There's one last curveball for this year's Chalk It Up!: As wildfires rage, Sacramento's unhealthy air quality may stretch through the holiday weekend.

Currently, Chalk It Up! has no Plan B for air quality issues.

Even with COVID-19, Chalk It Up!

encourages visitors to watch the artists at work. The organization has provided all artists branded face masks, and asks that spectators respect mask and social distancing mandates.

For those wary of in-person visits, all completed chalk art—as well as recordings of festival performances and a link to donate to Chalk It Up!'s grant program—will be available on [chalkitup.org](http://chalkitup.org) after Sept. 7.

The festival is rolling with the punches, rebranding as *Chalk It Up! Around the Town*.

Find an interactive map of artists' locations at [chalkitup.org](http://chalkitup.org).