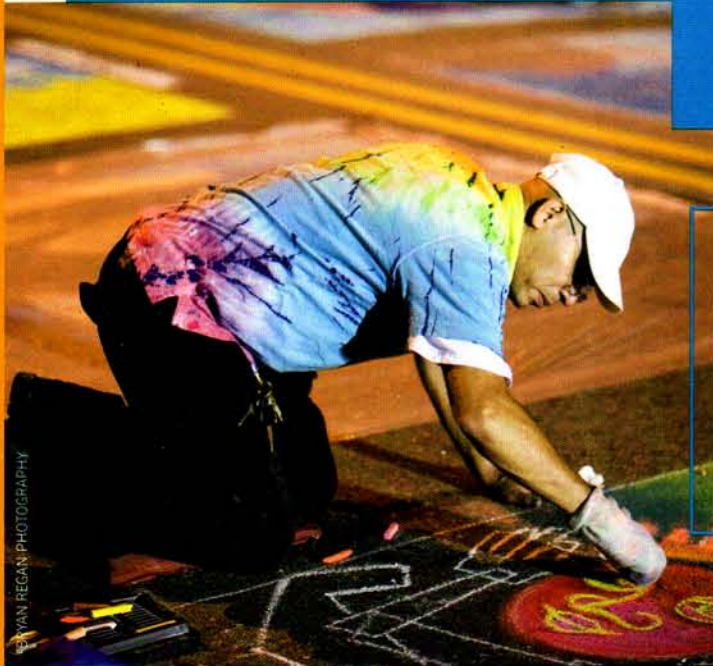


it only takes a SPARK



artSPARK



musicSPARK



danceSPARK

by Jennifer Powell

The weather may be cooling off, but for the local art and creative community, it's heating up for the fourth annual SPARKcon festival, a four-day celebration of local talent, art and creativity in the Triangle. This year, the event will move to Fayetteville Street in downtown Raleigh September 17th-20th.

Thousands of people are expected to fill the streets to celebrate the Triangle's thriving creative community. The sounds of this creativity will be heard all around... from dancing in the street to heels stomping down the runway, to spray paint cans decorating walls and all kinds of local music.

"We've had record amounts of participation in the planning of the event this year," says SPARKcon spokesman Aly Khalifa. "We're really stunned by how many people are joining in this 100% volunteer effort. Our intention is to have SPARKcon be a mirror of the local creative scene."

Each element of SPARKcon is individually named and organized by volunteers across different industries. This year promises to be the biggest ever, with new additions such as sipSPARK, an Iron Chef-like mixology competition pitting area bartenders against one another, and gamingSPARK, an event that will provide local digital gaming designers a showcase for their latest releases and give the public some playing time.

Old favorites will also be bigger and better. artSPARK will feature 450 chalk artists drawing on the street in front of the Capitol as well as site specific art installations and an experimental video lounge. danceSPARK will offer dance lessons to the public right on Fayetteville Street, including the tango and salsa. ideaSPARK, a forum for idea generation and innovation, will kick off SPARKcon Thursday night at Marbles Museum with a new presentation format called Pecha Kucha: Up to ten groups are allowed 20 slides apiece, 20 seconds for each slide.

Another crowd favorite, fashionSPARK, will draw thousands of spectators to downtown Friday night, September 18th, to see the latest in local fashion talent. Designers partner with area recording artists like the Rosebuds and Kooley High to produce music for the show, and area salons volunteer to style all of the models.

Designers chosen for the show have a connection to the Triangle, and all will be showing new work. Fans can expect to see more than a dozen local favorites this year such as

DRC, Revamp, Ahpeele, Raleigh Denim, LLLavender and Fysh alongside newcomers like Tyger Alexis and Andrea Schmidt.

"This year we'll be showing a full clothing line, not just jeans, which is really exciting," says Raleigh Denim co-creator Sarah Lytvinenko. "fashionSPARK is such a fun, creative outlet for our designs. We love working with all of the volunteers and being connected to our community year after year."

Raleigh Denim is gaining national momentum after being picked up by Barney's New York last year. This is their third year showing at fashionSPARK. They will be among a few of the many designers whose items will be available for purchase directly after the show at shopSPARK.

Also new this year is greenSPARK, a concept-driven event designed to reduce waste and improve the environmental impact of the festival as a whole. Through partnerships with the City of Raleigh and McGill Environmental Services, the festival will offer free recycling and food composting. There will be water stations throughout Fayetteville Street where attendees can refill water bottles and a raffle

fashionSPARK

for environmentally friendly prizes with proceeds going to NC Green Power to fund alternative energy initiatives.

"Our community is more in tune than ever with the green movement," says environmental engineer Matt Tendam, who is organizing greenSPARK. "It is important for us to be good stewards of our resources, and an event like this helps to highlight the small things we can do to make an impact. We want to educate people and make it easy for everyone to make a difference. The goal is to introduce small changes this year and provide a basis to make SPARKcon a more sustainable event in the coming years."

SPARKcon, including fashionSPARK, is free to the public, with the exception of a few music events taking place at private clubs. Mark your calendar for the weekend of September 17th through 20th and be a part of this inspiring and exciting event. More information is available at www.sparkcon.com. ♦



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