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NEWS RELEASE

July 30, 2019

Photos available—Download links and sample captions at end of release

State arts grant awarded to FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace

Rochester, MN – This year's FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace festival will feature a new arts focus, thanks to the Minnesota State Arts Board. They recently awarded the Minnesota Festival Support grant funding for projects featuring an array of artists designed to engage, involve and entertain FEAST! attendees.

"FEAST! planners have always worked to engage the community in local foods beyond just buying local, and we're excited to have some great artists join the effort this year to help get people thinking more about their food and where it comes from," said Brett Olson, Creative Director at Renewing the Countryside and Rochester Art Center board member.

Background Stories founder Arlene Birt has participated in installations around the world with her work intersecting art, design, and visual storytelling. Their "String Survey" asks attendees to weave their own yarn as they respond to survey questions, for a collective display that represents attendees' thoughts about local foods.

A second component will involve live music, including Mary DuShane and Nick Jordan's rootsy, rhythmic fiddle music, and others to be determined.

Third will be a Vegetable "Alfombra," or carpet, constructed on the floor out of local veggies from area farmers. Artist Susan Waughtal will curate the project, creating a design in advance, and allowing festival attendees to take part in creating the giant mandala-like design. A special viewing stage will be constructed so attendees can view the masterpiece from above.

Finally, videographer Ross Ballinger will capture festival-goers creating the alfombra and string survey. This will help festival planners as they work to document how the public engages with and enjoys this arts addition to the local foods show, now in its sixth year.

FEAST! Local Foods Marketplace is co-hosted by non-profit organizations, [Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation](#) and [Renewing the Countryside](#), and sponsored by the [Minnesota Department of Agriculture](#). For more, visit www.local-feast.org. Follow @localfeastnetwork on [Facebook](#), @Local_Feast on [Twitter](#), localfeast on [Instagram](#), and use #localFEAST to join the conversation.

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Photos and suggested captions:

String survey #1

Download link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1idPWuWpxwWQd5wFPLui2UgjE4EQp9FGA>

Sample caption:

Background Stories created this "String Survey" for the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize Forum with strings color-coded by topic, designed to spark conversation and explore common ground.

String survey #2

Download link: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1fWC1ZirWCNe0UXf6wfWNLInkmNuX5pMp>

Sample caption:

Background Stories created this 50-foot data visualization of participants' thoughts and opinions on climate change for the Northern Spark arts festival.

Mary DuShane and Nick Jordan

Download link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ViO6DzP3M70PtCLP7Yw7j2rMQp7_gvT6/view?usp=sharing

Sample caption:

Mary DuShane, the original fiddler on Garrison Keillor's Prairie Home Companion radio show, teams up with Nick Jordan on vocals, guitar, mandolin, flute, whistle and foot percussion. Together they present a lively array of vintage old time, Cajun and swing songs, with Appalachian and some Irish fiddle tunes.