

**July 29 – 31, 2016**

**BELLEVUE FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS – THIS IS OUR STORY**

Behind the much-loved Bellevue Festival of the Arts, there is a compelling story that has made the Festival what it is today – a leader in its field. Some thirty years ago, when the fair was nothing more than an idea, a group of artists channeled their disenchantment with the for-profit fine art fair culture. They decided to create a show that fellow artists would be excited to be a part of, with a structure that gave back to the community– a new opportunity for the public to commune with artists and their art.

The founding ideas of the Craft Cooperative of the Northwest were simple – do away with the for-profit commissions that were being charged artists and give any proceeds collected from the flat booth fees back to the community that supported them. The artists of CCNW appealed to a few local landlords who agreed to lease their parking lots to bring the festival to fruition. A jury of artists was employed to ensure quality and fair selection of art and the Rest of the Best Fest was founded. The festival changed its name to the Bellevue Festival of the Arts in 2004 but the mission and organization remained the same, by artists, for artists. The model that was created and continues to this day has resulted in a respect and admiration between the staff and the artists who share their work. These ideals have not only proven to be a blueprint for our success, but they have inspired other festivals in the area to follow our lead with respect and support of artists.

Through diligence and respect for the community that supports it, the Festival has blossomed into what it is today. The Bellevue Festival of the Arts is a product of its environment. We have remained mindful of this and it has served us well. The continued success of the Festival and the artists it supports is dependent on the relationships with our community and we recognize our obligation as stewards to the artists, the local community, and the greater community that we are all a part of.