

Media Release

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NORFOLK FESTEVENTS ANNOUNCES 2015 NORFOLK HARBORFEST POSTER ARTIST AND ARTWORK

Norfolk, VA, (March 30, 2015) – Norfolk Festevents, Ltd. has released the artists name and artwork that will be the centerpiece of **38th Annual Norfolk Harborfest® Friday June 5, 2015 – Sunday, June 7, 2015** in Town Point Park on the Downtown Norfolk Waterfront. While receiving many artist applications from all around the country for the coveted honor of creating the 39th Annual Norfolk Harborfest poster, William Bensen was the shining star whose talent and story caught everyone’s attention. Husband and father of two, Bensen was able to capture the beauty and serenity of the vibrant downtown Norfolk waterfront and create what is sure to be one of the best pieces of artwork that Harborfest has yet seen.

"It's a great honor to be this year's artist for the 2015 Harborfest Poster. Harborfest is one of the biggest events hosted by the Tidewater area and to be considered worthy enough to do this is a humbling experience." He calls the painting "The Biggest Block Party In Town." This is not his first time doing a poster. In 2010 he did the Harborfest poster which won a bronze at the Pinnacle Awards. The Pinnacle Awards recognizes outstanding accomplishments and top quality creative, promotional, operational and community outreach programs and materials produced by festivals and events around the world. The award is given annually by the IFEA, the International Festivals & Events Association.

"It's a good arrangement working with Norfolk Festevents, the company that produces Harborfest. Dominick (Fini, Vice President of Sales and Marketing) and Karen (Scherberger, Chief Executive Officer) know what they want. I mean, they've been working at this for 39 years so of course they know what they're after. But they gave me, and I assume the other poster artists, opportunities to pitch different approaches which they are open to and which happened in this case. It means a lot to an artist to do that." Bensen said on working with Norfolk Festevents on the commemorative poster.

Bensen's interest in art developed as a young child, surrounded by a family of artists. His grandfather was an artisan at the turn of the 20th century with clients such as Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, the Posts, the Huttons, and the Vanderbilts. Grandfather Bensen's designs graced landmarks such as Mar-A- Lago, the Biltmore estate, and American embassies throughout Europe. Bensen's father sculpted iron into creative furniture forms. His uncle was a photographer and an early cinematographer who captured images of Shirley Temple and other notables.

After earning a master's degree in history from the University of Delaware and a master's degree in television production from Brooklyn College in New York City, Bensen followed his uncle into the world of film and television. As a 10-time Emmy-award-winning producer, Bensen has worked with Turner Broadcasting, the Fox Family Channel, and has produced a children's television show for NASA. While television and film created a livelihood, Bensen's passion for oil painting became his center of creativity.

Long inspired by N.C. Wyeth, John Singer Sargent, Joaquin Sorolla, and Anders Zorn, many of Bensen's canvases capture solitude and the play of light upon nature. Bensen states, "I am drawn to nature. Not just the nature that lies around us, but also the nature that lies within. Strength. Solitude. Tranquility. The simple, yet complex paths that weave through life. Colors that reflect our souls. Nature is the stage that connects us."

Bensen and his wife were married in Risør, Norway, and currently reside in Virginia with their young twins. William and his wife often travel within the U.S. and other world regions - which allows them the opportunity to gather new subject material for William's art.

<u>Honors and Awards</u>	<u>Associations</u>
<p>American Impressionist Society Annual Show</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Selected as finalist, 2008</i> <p>"Out and About" Plein Aire Norfolk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Juror's Award, 2008</i> <p>Vincent Hester Art Gallery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>"Pathways & Passage:" One Man Art Show, 2007</i> • <i>"Missions of California:" One Man Art Show, 2006</i> <p>Nansemond Annual Art Show</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Featured Artist, 2005</i> <p>"100 Ways to Paint Gardens" Book</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Featured in book published by International Artist Magazine, 2004</i> <p>Oil Painters of America East Coast Exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Selected as finalist, 2002</i> <p>Norfolk Botanical Gardens Art Show</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Best of Show, 2001</i> <p>Dover Art League</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>First Place, Expression, 2000</i> <p>First Annual Marine Exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Second Place, 2000</i> <p>Chesapeake Bay Arts Association</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Grumbacher Gold Award, 1999</i> • <i>Best of Show, 1998 and 1997</i> 	<p>Oil Painters of America</p> <p>American Impressionist Society</p> <p>American Society of Marine Painters</p> <p>National Oil & Acrylic Painters' Society</p>



Norfolk Festevents, Ltd., based in Norfolk, Virginia, is a private, not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating the most dynamic urban waterfront community in American through innovative programming and imaginative uses of its historic waterfront spaces. An extensive 10 month schedule of diverse outdoor cultural events, festivals, concerts, entertainment, holiday programs, tall ship visits, sports and recreation are presented in two popular and welcoming waterfront environments—Town Point Park located in downtown Norfolk on the banks of the Elizabeth River and Ocean View Beach Park situated on the shore line of the Chesapeake Bay. Norfolk Festevents has served as the City of Norfolk’s official event marketing agency since the city’s downtown waterfront revitalization initiatives began in 1982. The organization has garnered international acclaim for its advocacy for public access to waterfronts, outstanding quality programming, and development of public spaces, transforming Norfolk into one of the most progressive, fun and livable waterfront communities in the country.