



March 12, 2020

2020 Ward World Championship Canceled Due to Growing Concerns Over COVID-19/Coronavirus

After careful consideration the Ward Foundation has come to the difficult decision to cancel the annual Ward World Championship Wildfowl Carving Competition & Art Festival, which was to be held April 24-26 in Ocean City, MD. This decision comes in the wake of the World Health Organization declaring the outbreak an official global pandemic, the current United States travel restrictions put in place, and key recommendations from the State of Maryland, issued by Governor Larry Hogan, that, “Local communities and cities should actively consider canceling mass gatherings.”

Following increased and overwhelming concerns about the COVID-19 virus, the Ward Foundation Board of Directors has collectively voted to cancel the event with the greatest intentions to protect the health of our staff, volunteers, competitors, and visitors. The Ward Foundation is taking every potential precaution to keep individuals safe, following Center for Disease Control recommendations.

Statement from Ward Foundation Chairman, and chair of the World Championship Committee, Rich Smoker: “The spread of the virus continues to happen. With travel restricted from all points of the planet, if we continued, it couldn’t really be a world event. But, please don’t say the 50th is not happening; it is merely postponed until next April. To help keep our competitors, exhibitors, judges, and attendees safe, we must step back. We just postpone our annual ‘homecoming’ for a year. Our friendship will endure as we keep carving for the 50th next year! Be safe, be well, I’m missing you already. Until next year.”

Executive director, Dr. Kristin Sullivan, adds, “Before there was a Ward Museum there was the World Championship. This competition is an important institution, and we at the Ward Museum are deeply saddened by the need to cancel. But we need to be mindful of the health and safety of our extended Ward family. The silver lining is that next year will be the 50th anniversary of Worlds (1971-2021), so we can all look forward to an even bigger celebration next year: the 50th World Championship, on its 50th anniversary. And in the meantime, we hope everyone stays healthy, and in touch with any concerns or ideas as we move forward.”

The Ward Foundation understands and recognizes the gravity of this announcement for the competitors, vendors, and others in the Worlds community who rely on the Ward World Championship to support, sustain, and grow their business and networks. Although the event will not take place in the manner in which we hoped, we will continue to do our best to support you as the Ward World Championship returns next April.

In the coming weeks, Ward Museum staff will be in touch with announcements pertaining to special exemptions for the competition, refunds or deferments for tickets and class fees, and other considerations. Those with questions should contact the Ward Museum at 410-742-4988 ext. 100, or email Marketing and Communications Coordinator Eric Stewart at ejstewart@salisbury.edu. Follow us @WardMuseum on social media, and visit www.wardmuseum.org for updates.