



SHORT RELEASE:

It's Women's History Month! Join the Oak Park Arts District for their annual WOW! Women Owned Works event on Saturday, March 19th from 11am - 4pm (hours vary by business). Celebrate and support all of the unique, women-owned businesses flourishing on Harrison Street. Follow #shoponharrisonstreet in your social media for updates. Look for bright yellow decorations inside & outside of participating businesses.

FULL PRESS RELEASE:

In 1980, President Jimmy Carter proclaimed the first Women's History Week and a few years later, in 1987, Congress formally established Women's History Month. Since then, women's contributions to the United States have been celebrated every March. In the Oak Park Arts District, the annual WOW! Women Owned Works event takes place on March 19th to celebrate and highlight women-owned businesses in the district.

Gail Coughlin of Elevate Creative (321 Harrison Street) came up with the idea for the event in 2017 after the former president's inauguration and the subsequent Women's March. "I thought it would be a good opportunity to celebrate all the women-owned businesses in the arts district—the most of any business district in Oak Park [we think]," says Gail. "It was not a happy time and I wanted to bring something positive to the neighborhood."

Yellow was chosen as the signature color for the event. "It's happy and cheerful. It's bright and attention-grabbing," says Gail, then adds with a laugh, "Yellow is an underrated color."

It happens to fall the day before the first day of spring which offers some hope for warmer weather after an especially cold and snowy February. And the WOW! event comes almost exactly 2 years since Governor Pritzker issued Illinois' stay-at-home order in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic.

“Business owners are exhausted. We are tired of thinking of ways to pivot and promote our businesses and to keep our customers engaged on top of the constant worries of daily life—home, school, kids, and health. This event gives us something to celebrate. Every year we’ve had more participating businesses offer sales and promotions and more customers know about it,” says Gail.

“My business was forced to close for three months in the beginning of Covid and so we amped up our online store. It’s been going really well. Our focus is hair, skin, bath, and body items that are eco-friendly, health-conscious, and women-owned. We have a full complement of beauty items,” says Gail. Elevate Creative will offer a goody bag with every online order during WOW!

Bead in Hand (145 Harrison Street) and owner Kim Humphrey have participated in the WOW! event in the past and will once again showcase jewelry handmade by the staff. They will also have a sale on yellow glass beads and for every \$100 purchase you receive a \$10 gift certificate for use at a later date. “Since the pandemic began, we’ve created a number of do-it-yourself kits that can be purchased through our website and then shipped or held for pickup. They are projects that don’t require special tools and have fairly easy-to-follow instructions,” says Kim.

Tamekia Swint, the executive director of Styles 4 Kidz (235 Harrison Street), sees the WOW! event as an opportunity to get to know the residents of Oak Park and build community. They will have a selfie station near their front door and door prizes and candy for families that stop in. Tamekia is hoping to raise awareness for her non-profit that “expects to serve 900 kids and 400 families this year.”

At Purple Sun Arts (142 Harrison Street), owner Ann Viernes can’t wait to “celebrate the end of winter, the beginning of spring, and the vernal equinox.” Her store will offer 10% off items with the color yellow.

Centre Physical Therapy is celebrating WOW! by offering free injury screenings and face & arm shamrock painting from 11am-2pm (207 Harrison Street). Caty Stegemann, owner and founder wanted to be mindful of those that may be wearing a mask making face painting not an option, so came up with the idea of arm painting as well.

The Oak Park Arts District WOW! Women Owned Works event will be held Saturday, March 19, from 11am-4pm although hours will vary by business. Follow #shoponharrisonstreet on social media and visit www.oakparkartsdistrict.com for more information.

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The Oak Park Arts District Business Association is a partnership of locally owned businesses on Harrison Street between Austin Boulevard and Ridgeland Avenue. The non-for-profit was formed to provide these businesses a way of meeting each other and working together to make the business district a viable and profitable part of the Oak Park community and to maintain a flourishing arts and culture community.

Connect with OPADBA at <https://oakparkartsdistrict.com/>, or follow OPADBA at [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#).

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