



# TAKE ME to the RIVER

By Heather Rutledge

Imagine — art, music, theater and storytelling at dozens of venues along the St. Croix River, anchored by two autumn weekends.

**W**ith Take Me to the River 2012, you will get some of the best arts festivals of the year woven together with cultural events and activities — making the St. Croix Valley a fantastic destination for the arts. This year’s “festival of festivals” takes place Sept. 15–23.

Take Me to the River was the natural outgrowth of the regional arts scene and the busy, beautiful fall weekends in the St. Croix Valley. A group of arts enthusiasts connected with ArtReach St. Croix recognized that there were a number of great art fairs and festivals on the same weekends. By joining forces and pooling resources, the art festivals can increase the enthusiasm, participation and buzz around each individual event while encouraging people to hop across the Valley to find other cultural gems, art-full activities and live per-

formances. This year’s anchor events include the Hastings Art Fair, Afton’s Art in the Park, the Spirit of the St. Croix festival in Hudson, Marine Art Fair, Franconia Sculpture Park’s Arts and Artists Celebration, Rustic Road 13 Pottery Sale and Chateau St. Croix’s Fall Harvest Festival. Add to that theater, live music, storytelling, artist’s open studios, and you are guaranteed to find an arts itinerary to suit your mood.

Speaking of itineraries, how many festivals have you attended where you are given sample itineraries that include travel by car, bicycle, motorcycle or boat?! All of these modes of transportation are great ways to explore the Valley’s arts events while stopping off to grab a bite to eat or while taking in the valley views as the leaves begin to turn. The wild and scenic St. Croix River

provides a beautiful setting for Take Me to the River events.

Bill McCarthy from Stillwater, Minn., was one of the organizers of Take Me to the River’s pilot year in 2010. Bill sees the collaborative event as the beginning of a new trend. “By joining forces, artists and arts groups can increase their impact and their reach. This Valley is filled with amazing art and incredible artists,” says McCarthy. “Take Me to the River is an opportunity for us to combine our energies to invite people to experience the arts along the St. Croix River during a spectacular time of year.”

At ArtReach St. Croix’s home base in Stillwater, during September will be “Rhythms and Blues: artwork inspired by the river,” an exhibition featuring regional visual artists. Maps and sample itineraries will be available at ArtReach St. Croix and at the Take Me to the River

conciierge tents at each festival site. These resources will ensure that you make the most of your days by helping to navigate to the events — a new one beyond every bend in the river.

To keep up with what is going on, “like” ArtReach St. Croix on Facebook or sign up for their e-newsletter by going to their website at [www.artreachstcroix.org](http://www.artreachstcroix.org).

ArtReach St. Croix’s mission of connecting communities to the arts serves the lower St. Croix River from St. Croix Falls to Prescott in Wisconsin and from Hastings to Taylors Falls in Minnesota.

ArtReach St. Croix intends to build Take Me to the River into an annual event that showcases the incredible array of art and culture that exist around the St. Croix Valley. A full schedule of activities and festivals will be available online at [www.artreachstcroix.org](http://www.artreachstcroix.org).



A scene from the 2011 Spirit of the St. Croix Art Festival in Hudson, Wis. Photo courtesy of Hudson Area Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Bureau.

## The St. Croix River. Art. Dance. Music. Theater. Storytelling ...

Come experience the St. Croix River Valley and enjoy a one-of-a-kind "festival of festivals" — a different beat at every bend in the river. During the nine days of Take Me to the River 2012, a dozen river towns will host over 50 events including art fairs, concerts, story-slams, theater, poetry and more.

### September 15–16

- Fall Harvest Festival at Chateau St. Croix  
[www.chateaucroix.com/events.html](http://www.chateaucroix.com/events.html)
- Marine Art Fair  
[www.marineonstcroix.org/artfair.shtm](http://www.marineonstcroix.org/artfair.shtm)
- Osceola and the St. Croix ArtBarn  
[www.stcroixartbarn.com](http://www.stcroixartbarn.com)
- Rustic Road 13 Pottery Tour  
[www.rusticroad13pottery.com](http://www.rusticroad13pottery.com)

### September 22–23

- Spirit of the St. Croix Art Festival  
[www.hudsonwi.org](http://www.hudsonwi.org)
- Afton Art in the Park  
[www.aftonartfair.com](http://www.aftonartfair.com)
- 16th annual Franconia Art and Artists Celebration at Franconia Sculpture Park  
[www.franconia.org](http://www.franconia.org)
- Hastings Art Fair  
[www.hpaac.org](http://www.hpaac.org)



Heather Rutledge, ArtReach's new executive director, is a recent transplant from the Philadelphia area. "I was attracted to the St. Croix River Valley partially because of the proximity to the Twin Cities, but now I truly understand that the beauty of the Twin Cities is their proximity to places like the St. Croix Valley!" Rutledge continues, "Take Me to the River is an art-filled getaway, a vibrant, active slate of events highlighting the gems that surround our river."

