



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

CONTACT:

Whitney Smith, Marketing & PR Manager  
wsmith@ncarboretum.org  
(828) 665-2492 x204

## **The North Carolina Arboretum to Host ArborEvenings After-Hours Event Series this Summer featuring *Nature Connects®: Art with LEGO® Bricks***

**ASHEVILLE, N.C. (June 6, 2020)** – The North Carolina Arboretum, a 434-acre public garden located minutes from downtown Asheville and off the Blue Ridge Parkway, is excited to announce the return of its popular ArborEvenings after-hours series with a special toy-filled twist. This summer, guests will enjoy live music in the gardens while discovering illuminated sculptures from the Arboretum’s *Nature Connects®: Art with LEGO® Bricks* exhibit. Featuring 16 nature-inspired, larger-than-life sculptures made with nearly 500,000 LEGO Bricks, this nationally-known traveling exhibit draws inspiration from the living world and combines play with science to create an innovative intersection of education, entertainment and the environment.

Due to the addition of the *Nature Connects* exhibit, the Arboretum will be extending the dates and times of ArborEvenings this year. The event will be held every Thursday, Friday and Saturday, July through September, from 8 to 11 p.m. (some exclusion dates apply, please check website for details). Visitors are invited to sip and stroll through the Arboretum’s beautiful gardens and experience the *Nature Connects* exhibit after dark while listening to live music from a variety of local and regional artists. Sweet and savory snacks are available for purchase from the Arboretum’s Bent Creek Bistro along with alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages.

“As many are looking for a place of hope and respite during this time, we wanted to create an opportunity for locals and visitors to enjoy the beauty of nature in a nighttime setting,” shared George Briggs, executive director of The North Carolina Arboretum. “ArborEvenings provides our guests with a chance to get outdoors, support our local music industry and see our *Nature Connects* exhibit be brought to light within our spacious gardens.”

A special admission price of \$5 per person is required, collected at the door. Parking fees do not apply for ArborEvenings. Proceeds from ArborEvenings will support The North Carolina Arboretum Society, the Arboretum’s 501(c)(3) non-profit that provides financial assistance to further support the Arboretum’s mission and educational programming.

“Like many other cultural organizations in our community, we have faced a significant financial downfall due to the cancellation of many of our programs and the temporary closure of our property earlier this spring due to COVID-19,” said Briggs. “We appreciate the support from our members and guests who attend ArborEvenings and help the Arboretum through this financial hardship by purchasing a ticket to this unique fundraising event.”

ArborEvenings will also raise a special glass this year to those who are affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Ten percent of all proceeds from this year’s event series will be donated directly to MANNA FoodBank, the Feeding America food bank serving over 100,000 people facing hunger across 16 counties of Western North Carolina.

“During unprecedented times like these, continued help from community partners is absolutely essential to our ability to keep serving the dramatically growing number of people in need of food,” said Mary Nesbitt, Chief Development Officer for MANNA. “Every bit of support from these wonderful evenings will bring both food and hope to so many and we are beyond grateful.”

Members of The North Carolina Arboretum Society are also invited to attend a special “Membership Connects” ArborEvenings event on the third Wednesday of each month, July 15, August 19 and September 16, from 8 to 11 p.m. This event is only open to Arboretum Society Members and their accompanied guests; entry fees will be waived with a valid membership card upon arrival. To further support MANNA FoodBank, the Arboretum will have a food collection bin on-site for Arboretum members to donate to at the “Membership Connects” nights. A list of recommended foods can be found on the Arboretum’s website, [ncarboretum.org/events](http://ncarboretum.org/events).

*The North Carolina Arboretum is located off the Blue Ridge Parkway at Milepost 393. From I-26, take Exit 33 and follow Blue Ridge Parkway signs for two miles to the entrance ramp. Please visit [www.ncarboretum.org](http://www.ncarboretum.org) for parking fees and hours of operation.*

“The Arboretum and our Society members are proud to come together to support the hard work of MANNA FoodBank and their efforts to help relieve so many in our community who are in need of food assistance,” continued Briggs. “We hope that ArborEvenings will provide a special place of comfort, joy and food.”

Details on ArborEvenings and a list of performers can be found online at [ncarboretum.org/events](http://ncarboretum.org/events).

For more information on MANNA FoodBank, please visit [mannfoodbank.org](http://mannfoodbank.org).

### **About The North Carolina Arboretum**

Each year more than 500,000 visitors experience the Arboretum’s gardens, trails, exhibits and plant shows, educational programs and lectures. The Arboretum’s ability to meet its mission and enrich the visitor experience is made possible by a community of supporting resources – from members, volunteers and staff to state and local funds, special events, tribute gifts, grants and community partners.

The central mission of The North Carolina Arboretum, an affiliate institution of the 17-campus University of North Carolina System, is to cultivate connections among people, plants and places. A standard daytime parking fee of \$16 per personal vehicle is required for non-Arboretum members. Special events and after-hours activities may require additional fees. For more information, please call (828) 665-2492 or visit [www.ncarboretum.org](http://www.ncarboretum.org).

### **About MANNA FoodBank**

MANNA FoodBank is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization serving Western North Carolina since 1983. As an accredited member of Feeding America, the nation’s largest domestic hunger relief organization, the mission of MANNA FoodBank is to involve, educate, and unite people in the work of ending hunger in Western North Carolina. MANNA serves over 200 community-based non-profit food assistance partner agencies in 16 Western North Carolina counties and distributed 19.8 million pounds of food in 2018/2019. MANNA FoodBank is a nonpartisan organization committed to sharing facts and information about issues related to hunger in Western North Carolina and how they affect those we serve. For more information, visit [MANNAFoodbank.org](http://MANNAFoodbank.org), or call 828-299-FOOD.

###

*The North Carolina Arboretum is located off the Blue Ridge Parkway at Milepost 393. From I-26, take Exit 33 and follow Blue Ridge Parkway signs for two miles to the entrance ramp. Please visit [www.ncarboretum.org](http://www.ncarboretum.org) for parking fees and hours of operation.*