

## Willits arts center opening delayed due to COVID

Tuesday, September 7, 2021

Staff Report

### After two positive tests among staff, TACAW cancels Sept. 25-26 events

The Arts Campus at Willits (TACAW) has indefinitely postponed its grand opening, the midvalley nonprofit announced Tuesday afternoon, citing two recent COVID-19 cases among staff and the recent surge of local infections.

Its grand opening had been slated to run Sept. 25 and 26.

Earlier this summer, an outdoor concert on the campus was canceled after executive director Ryan Honey tested positive for the virus. Another staffer tested positive late last week, according to Honey's statement issued Tuesday.

"[T]his latest episode gave us an opportunity to assess or current COVID protocols and review our plans for programming this fall," Honey wrote. "After careful consideration, we have decided to postpone TACAW's Grand Opening Celebration while continuing with our 'soft open.'"

TACAW's decision marks the second major valley cultural event to cancel due to the emergence of the delta variant of the coronavirus and the re-emergence of infections here. The 5Point Adventure Film

Festival was the first, canceling its already-postponed October event.

"This was a difficult decision for TACAW's board and staff, but we are confident it is the right one," Honey wrote. "Our Grand Opening was going to be an inclusive and freewheeling event where our community gathered to get inspired and experience a sampling of all of the performing arts we offer. Food, drink, and incredible performances were planned for what was sure to be an exhilarating and uplifting weekend. However, given the recent surge of the virus and the plan for the opening weekend, we were not certain we could properly execute our Covid-safety protocols."

The nonprofit will continue outdoor programming through the fall and is developing a new regime of health and safety protocols developed in conjunction with Dr. Brooke Allen, including mandatory vaccinations for all staff and patrons, maintaining a clean theater, robust air filtration measures, regular staff testing, and creating a mask-friendly environment.

"We understand that these actions will put many of our patrons at ease but may not be enough for some members of our audience," Honey continued. "We respect whatever decision you make when deciding to attend an event at TACAW."