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## Touchstone Center for Crafts looks forward to Golden Anniversary

May 13, 2022



Alex Byers

Touchstone Center for Crafts in Farmington is celebrating its 50th year of classes and activities for artists and artisans.

Since its founding in 1972 as the Pioneer Crafts Council, the Touchstone Center for Crafts has been offering craft education on a wooded 150-acre campus located in Farmington.

Originally focused on fostering interest in preserving traditional crafts, Pennsylvania's premier craft school has since expanded its mission to include contemporary and experimental techniques. These include blacksmithing, ceramics, metals and jewelry, glass, drawing and painting, and special topic areas such as fiber arts, paper making and mosaics.

Touchstone usually offers 60-plus workshops in seven fully-equipped studios. An equal number of instructors from all over the country lead the two- to five-day workshops attended by over 500 participants.

The 2022 season runs from June 20 to Sept. 26 and early registration is recommended.

Marketing manager, Dean Simpson, said the annual Open House, scheduled from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, June 11, will serve as the kick-off for this year's 50th anniversary.

"This family-friendly event will be filled with demonstrations, hands-on entertainment, gallery exhibitions and more," Simpson said.

During the day, visitors will be able to enjoy music, culinary treats from various food trucks, campus and studio tours and demos by local and regional artists. They will also be able to shop the gallery store, meet representatives from partner organizations and get information about things to do in the Laurel Highlands.

Even before the annual open house, Touchstone is organizing a pleine air (outdoor) painting session from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sunday, May 22. Artists of all skill levels are invited to participate in the event held at the nearby Christian W. Klay Winery.

Registered participants are asked to bring their own supplies to paint, draw, or photograph alongside beginner and seasoned artisans. They will also be able to enjoy demonstrations with tips for painting outdoors. Following the event, participating artists may want to photograph their work for judging and a chance to win prizes.

Advance registration (\$25 for adults, \$10 for those 18 and under) is encouraged. Visitors who might want to walk around and view the artists at work will be admitted free of charge.

From July 17 to 22, Touchstone will offer teen-only workshops that are fully funded, meaning participating teens will receive free tuition and room and board, with only a small fee for workshop materials. Simpson said around 26 teens will be admitted to the sessions and advises early submission of applications before the May 1 deadline.

Veterans and their family members and caretakers might want to jot down the dates Aug. 15 to 19 when Touchstone is featuring a special veterans workshop titled "Transformations in Paper." Except for the cost of materials and studio fees, the workshop is completely funded, and a limited number of spaces are available. Applications are available online at [www.touchstonecrafts.org](http://www.touchstonecrafts.org).

From 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on select Fridays throughout the summer, Touchstone will offer Date Night get-togethers in which participants can bring a spouse, partner or friend along to join in a mini-workshop that will introduce them to their choice of crafts. Following the mini-workshop, participants will be able to enjoy refreshments and appetizers while marveling at the take home item they created. An earlier 5:30 p.m. dinner option is also available for an extra charge.

Finally, the Golden Anniversary year will come to a close on Sunday, Oct. 9 with the annual Touchstone Gala held at the Barn at Fallingwater and a "Touchstone: A Half-Century of Craft" exhibition at the Speyer Gallery at Fallingwater will run from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31.

"Every day, we hear stories of how Touchstone has impacted people's lives over the last 50 years," Simpson said. "Now, we're looking forward to the next 50!"

For more information, phone 724-329-1370 or visit [www.touchstonecrafts.org](http://www.touchstonecrafts.org).