

T E N N E S S E E  
**CRAFTWEEK**

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## **Gene Johnson Announced as Tennessee Craft Week Honorary Chairman**

*Diamond Rio artist's affinity for wood turning reveals appreciation for crafts*

(Nashville) August 31, 2016- Tennessee Craft is delighted to announce **Gene Johnson** as the 2016 **Honorary Chairman** for [Tennessee Craft Week](#). A member of the **GRAMMY Award winning band Diamond Rio**, Johnson loves the forest and has a wonderful talent in carpentry, along with a passionate hobby of collecting old tools and old instruments. He is scheduled to visit TCW events in Chattanooga, Memphis and Nashville during the October celebration.

Tennessee Craft Week is a **collection of craft events and happenings designed to connect and celebrate Craft Artists**, the work they create and the businesses that support them. This year's **2016 Tennessee Craft Week** is slated for **October 7-16, 2016**. Executive Director Teri Alea says, "Our organization is proud to have such a gracious and multi-talented artist to represent the hundreds of creative craft artists in our region. Gene understands the role knowledge and practice play in turning out a fine craft object or a well-crafted tune. We are pleased Gene can share his love for fine craft and the value it adds to our communities."

Johnson, who plays mandolin and sings tenor for [Diamond Rio](#), honored six times as **Vocal Group of the Year**, grew up in Sugar Grove, Pennsylvania. He played the mandolin professionally at a hometown square dance at the age of 4 years old but his finest performance would come years later when he was part of an acoustic quartet at Carnegie Hall.

Heavily influenced by the early country and bluegrass music followed by folk and blues, Gene Johnson joined a well-known group from Kentucky called J. D. Crowe and The New South. As the Tennessee River Boys left Opryland to go on the road, Marty, Dan, Jimmy and Brian invited him to form Diamond Rio in 1989.

Johnson is pleased to be "the voice" for Tennessee Craft Week, saying, "Music was passed down from both my mother's and father's side of the family. Because of this I started playing at a very early age. My father was also the foreman, then superintendent of a furniture company. Therefore, he knew his way around the woodworking equipment, and did a great deal of design work for the company. So not only did my father pass down his love for music, but also enthusiasm for his craft.

I was attending college to become a teacher (woodworking of course) when I got a call to play with a professional recording band. Music won out, but my love for woodworking, turning, and furniture has remained a passionate part of my life.

I am honored and excited to be a part of this year's Tennessee Craft Week. Please come join us October 7-16, as we celebrate 50 years of all things made in Tennessee!"

In 2015, Tennessee Craft gained national attention earning top honors with the **American Craft Week 2015 Star Award**. Hundreds of artists showcased handmade craft in this concentrated one-week celebration. Tennessee Craft Week aligns with [American Craft Week](#), which promotes the recognition of handcrafted art across the United States each October. Partnering with the **Tennessee Department of Tourist Development** and sponsored by the nonprofit organization Tennessee Craft, TCW shines a spotlight on the collective impact that craft has on our culture, community and economy.

All fourteen **Tennessee Welcome Centers** will be hosting craft demonstrations with gifted craft artists sharing their creative process and skills with visitors across the great state of Tennessee. More than 13 million people visit the Tennessee Welcome Centers annually. *The public is invited to stop at a Tennessee Welcome Center during the week of October 7-16, to experience a piece of Americana that is "[Made in Tennessee!](#)"*

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**About Diamond Rio:** Formed in 1989 in Nashville, TN the band consists of Gene Johnson (mandolin, tenor vocals), Jimmy Olander (lead guitar, acoustic guitar, banjo), Brian Prout (drums), Marty Roe (lead vocals, acoustic guitar), Dan Truman (keyboards), and Dana Williams (bass guitar, baritone vocals).

The Grammy award-winning and six-time *Vocal Group of the Year* signed to Arista Records and in 1991 with the release of "Meet In The Middle," became the first country music group in history to reach #1 with a debut single. The band is also known for their hit singles "How Your Love Makes Me Feel," "One More Day," "Beautiful Mess," "Unbelievable," "In A Week Or Two" and more. Known for playing every note on every album, Diamond Rio has released ten studio albums (including a Christmas album), two Greatest Hits compilations and their first-ever live project, *Diamond Rio Live*. Known for their charity commitments including long-time spokespersons for Big Brothers Big Sisters, the band has raised over \$1,000,000.00 for non-profits and received the Minnie Pearl Humanitarian award.

Visit [www.diamondrio.com](http://www.diamondrio.com)

Celebrating fifty years, **Tennessee Craft**, formerly The Tennessee Association of Craft Artists, works to continue and create Tennessee's fine craft tradition. With more than 500 members throughout the state, Tennessee Craft serves as the premier connecting point for local, independent makers and their audiences through craft fairs, exhibitions, professional development, networking, mentorship and other educational programs.

Visit [www.tennesseeecraft.org](http://www.tennesseeecraft.org) to learn more.

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