



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Brookhaven business community matches Cherry Blossom Festival cost

Brookhaven, GA, Aug. 7, 2015 – When some 10,000 visitors descended on Blackburn Park for Brookhaven’s inaugural Cherry Blossom Festival in March over a three-day period, 95 percent of survey respondents rated their experience as “good” to “excellent,” and city officials say they are pleased the business community stepped up to help fund the celebration.

While the city is dedicating \$123,866 from hotel/motel tax funds for the festival, more than 60 businesses contributed \$128,192 through sponsorships, vendors and concessions.

“We are proud that the business community stepped up to match dollar for dollar what our tourism funds are accomplishing, even a little more. It was a true public-private partnership, and we consider this a long-term investment,” said Mayor Rebecca Chase Williams, adding that it’s required by law to spend the hotel/motel tax revenue on events that attract visitors to the city. “We are planning to build on this legacy next year by finding a partner to help produce the festival.”

The city is currently in talks with Discover DeKalb to manage the event next year.

The hotel/motel tax also helps fund other events that draw people to Brookhaven, having helped fund more than \$100,000 for events like Soccerfest, the Brookhaven Bolt, Live in the Park, the Brookhaven Arts Festival and the Chili Cook-off. It also funds the city tourism manager’s salary.

The Georgia Municipal Association recently released a case study stating the benefits of the arts and events that bring the arts to the community.

“The results are seen through revitalizing downtowns, attracting entrepreneurs, activating community gathering spaces, changing education and forging a shared identity and strong sense of place,” wrote Karen L. Paty, Georgia Council for the Arts Executive Director, and Lamar North, Georgia Municipal Association Executive Director, in an introduction to the study.

Williams explained that city officials did not expect to make a profit on the Cherry Blossom Festival in its first year, and that they will learn from the experience when planning next year’s. However, it’s estimated that the festival helped infuse some \$70,000 into Brookhaven’s economy with hotel, restaurant and shop visits.

“Still, you can’t put a price on the community-building the Cherry Blossom Festival accomplished,” she said. “From the dog show to The Coasters and to just the plain fun everyone had, this festival was a gift to the city’s residents, businesses and visitors from the city and across the region.”

The festival also made a splash online. Some 25,097 visitors used the festival website – www.brookcherryfest.org - with 109,091 page views from 63 countries. On Twitter, 108 tweets used the festival hashtag, reaching more than 300,000 Twitter users.

Visitors to the festival who filled out the survey sheet exclaimed that they had fun and hope to come back next year.

Feedback included:

“Has the potential to grow in popularity and attendance.”

“Great atmosphere!”

“Love it. Would love to come back next year.”

“Amazing event! Will come every year.”

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