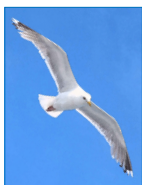


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SALISBURY INDEPENDENT

FREE

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DOWNTOWN AMPHITHEATER DEDICATED



City officials hosted a public "showing off" event as part of last week's 3rd Friday activities. Maryland First Lady Yumi Hogan, bottom left, was in Salisbury to help cut the ribbon on the new Downtown Amphitheater, which will play a vital role in the upcoming National Folk Festival Sept. 7-9. Below right, a new fountain has been added in the river next to the Amphitheater. The spray will be LED uplighted.

SPECIAL TO SALISBURY INDEPENDENT/KRISTIN ROBERTS

College Promise Scholarship is launched

Salisbury Independent

With the passage of a new law this year, Maryland will join several other states that are helping to make a community college education more affordable by offering a Community College Promise Scholarship program.

The program is scheduled to begin in the fall of 2019. Gov. Larry Hogan will appropriate \$15 million for FY 2020, and each year thereafter, for the program.

Eligible students include:

- Those who enroll within two years of high school graduation or completion of a GED in Maryland.
- Have a high school grade point average of at least 2.3 on a 4.0 scale.
- Enroll full time with at least 12 credits per term in a credit certificate or associate degree program, or enroll to earn a non-credit certificate.
- Have an annual adjusted gross income of not more than \$100,000 for those who are single or living in a single-parent household or \$150,000 for those who are married or living in a two-parent household.

The scholarship is "last-dollar" funding, which means that students must apply for federal, state and other financial aid.

All other financial aid must be awarded before these scholarship funds are provided.

Students will be required to re-apply every year.

Promise scholarship recipients must maintain employment in Maryland for at least one year for

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NATIONAL FOLK FESTIVAL

What to expect from an amazing cultural event

By Kathy Sawyer

The National Folk Festival, set to launch in Salisbury on Sept. 7, promises to spring a pleasant surprise on inhabitants of the town and the region, based on its track record in other places across the country.

The unique multicultural musical event, free to the public, has been bringing fresh energy to American cities for generations, and yet few understand what it's all about until they experience it.

Salisbury is the latest to win this opportunity in a 34-city competition, thanks to attributes that include an active arts community, its status as an economic and geographic hub, and supportive businesses and local officials led by its enthusiastic mayor, Jake Day.

"I believe this event will be transformative," for Salisbury, "and I don't use that term lightly," Day said in a phone interview, while on temporary duty wearing his other hat, as a Captain in the U.S. Army National Guard.

He serves as senior platoon training officer at Officer Candidate School.

The three-day Festival in the "capital of the Eastern Shore," population just over 30,000, is expected to attract an audience of as many as 150,000 over the three days.

The main attractions will be some 35 diverse musical groups performing on up to seven stages arrayed throughout the downtown.

The musical groups and craftspeople will highlight Salisbury's rich culture and its diverse population (which includes Hispanic, African American, Indian, Asian, Haitian and Korean residents).

Attendees can sample such performers as reggae's legendary Clinton Fearon, blues master Marquise Knox, bluegrass, mariachi, salsa, Texas fiddling and western swing, Korean music and dance, gospel, and so on.

Salisbury officials say they are eager to attract young professionals to redress a shortage of skilled labor caused by their fast-growing economy.

They see the Festival as a way to "expose thousands of prospective workers to a thriving community" where they could happily relocate their families, according to the town's winning bid.

Officials see the event as a "springboard for spiraling economic growth" and enhanced civic pride.

Their hopes are well-founded, if the experiences of towns such as Butte, Mont., Lowell, Mass., Bangor, Maine, and Richmond, Va., are any indication.

The National has often flown below the radar of the mainstream



Thousands of festival-goers follow along in a Friday night kick-off parade led by the Bronx New Heaven Shout Band Street in Bangor, Maine, during the 2003 National Folk Festival.

celebrity media. As a result, one of the first challenges for Festival boosters in Salisbury and elsewhere, as they have sought support from potential donors, has been figuring out how to communicate the event's special nature.

What exactly is the National Folk Festival?

Of all the challenges of mounting such a large event — logistical, financial and so on — "I think the hardest piece we've had to grapple with is communicating what this will be to an audience that's not familiar with it," said Day.

What is the Festival?

"It's very hard to explain to folks what this Festival is, until they've seen it for themselves," said Jack Berry, former executive director of Venture Richmond and a key champion of the festival in that Virginia city.

In the beginning, "many people

thought it was all about banjos and quilts, and had no idea the scope of the event, the relative diversity, the quality level, the size."

The National Folk Festival was born in 1934, out of the Great Depression, to lift peoples' spirits and reinforce a sense of community.

The event has evolved with the times, and it stands as the country's oldest multicultural celebration of traditional arts.

Unlike blockbuster pop concerts that exalt the featured celebrities, this breed of folk festival celebrates the host city along with the performers, according to arts professionals.

They suggest it is the modern incarnation of a county fair, but now transposed to urban settings. The festival embraces the cultural variety of the entire nation, yes, but at the same time, it offers people a chance to bond to the place where they live as it mirrors back to them

their own culture and spirit.

"The pied piper of this movement," Inside Arts Magazine once noted, is the National Council for the Traditional Arts.

The NCTA, based in Silver Spring, Md., is the nonprofit parent organization of the National Folk Festival.

It periodically invites cities all over the country to apply to host the event. Once it selects a community to host the National, it forms a partnership with local groups to produce the event for three years.

Ideally, those years lay the foundation for the host city to continue the event under its own auspices — while sometimes continuing to enlist the NCTA team's unique production skills and its expertise in rounding up excellent performers.

Rather than importing a pre-packaged block of performances, the NCTA team solicits community input to create fresh artistic line-ups that considers the local cultural landscape, according to Julia Olin, NCTA's longtime executive director.

"While the National always showcases the best of America — its finest musicians, dancers, and other tradition-bearers from across the nation — it also shines the light on the host city, state and region. The festival takes on interesting local flavors that express the uniqueness of each host community."

With vigorous support not only from Salisbury but also from the county, region and the state of Maryland, from public officials as well as private interests, Salisbury really has a leg up, Olin said. "Community leaders and local committees of every stripe are hustling about, raising money."

Mayor Day recalled that his interest in hosting the festival was piqued as early as 2013, when Lora Bottinelli, longtime director of Salisbury University's Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, "grabbed me up when I was a city council candidate and gave me a pamphlet" about the event.

At that point, he resisted on grounds the project was too ambitious for the town. "Lo and behold, three years later, I had just become mayor, and Lora came back to me and said, 'Jake, we've got to do this.' I said, 'You're darn right, we do!'"

'Sealed the deal'

When the NCTA team came to town to inspect the proposed site and meet with Salisbury's Festival team, Day said, they were dismayed to learn from the NCTA's Julia Olin that their plan for the location of the Festival, the so-called "footprint," was off base, failing to take

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into account the "street festival" nature of the event. "We were scared," he said, "but we went back to the drawing board that night."

They printed out maps of previous National Festivals in Richmond and several other cities.

"We laid our downtown over them and we created a new footprint for the next three years, based on developments we knew were coming. I think based on that, plus the tour of the city (with the NCTA team) the next day, we sealed the deal."

For audiences, any festival that follows the time-tested NCTA model features a head-spinning variety of choice, with musicians and dancers performing simultaneously on as many as seven stages scattered around the venue, along with tents and booths with craft demonstrations and abundant food vendors.

There are parades and musical demonstration-and-talk sessions. The performers convey an authentic "real people," back-porch, "roots" vibe.

Those roots might have been seeded in Ireland, Brazil, South Africa or Cambodia as well as in New Orleans or Nashville. They might offer Cajun, R&B, gospel, mariachi, bluegrass, blues, jazz, old-time, soukous, salsa, honky-tonk, and even hip hop.

The performers might be established greats such as the BeauSoleil Cajun band or teen up-and-comers like the Church Sisters bluegrass duo.

The NCTA team makes sure that production values are world class. The multiple stages, for example, must be arranged so that the sounds of the blues don't bleed into the bluegrass.

The NCTA team members "are so talented and resourceful that we will always partner with them," said Richmond's Berry.

"They bring an army of volunteers with passion and expertise that would be difficult to match."

For any city to mount a successful ongoing festival is not easy. Organizers who have accomplished the feat caution would-be hosts that it takes an aggressive "buy-in" by the local government in partnership with private organizations and businesses, including the media; it takes energetic fundraising; and it takes attention to a range of essential services such as parking, transportation, safety, crowd control, port-o-potties, landscaping, lighting — and the list goes on.

Here are some case studies from Festival cities:

'Parents almost crying'

Not so many years ago, Butte, Mont., had a sorry reputation as a decrepit mining town partially "eaten" by an abandoned pit poisoned with arsenic and lead.

Why would anyone want to go



Flag-wavers share the fun at last year's National Folk Festival in Greensboro, N.C. The festival brings Americans together for a joyous celebration of heritage, tradition and culture.

there?

Flash forward to now: Every July, Butte (population about 34,000) plays host to enthusiastic crowds estimated at 175,000 or more. They flock there not only from all over Montana, but also from across the Western states and parts of Canada.

What happened to bring in all these people? The answer is the National Folk Festival.

With its first festival in 2008, Butte struck the rich vein it had been searching for.

At an amphitheater built especially for the event on an abandoned mine yard, with sweeping views of the Northern Rockies, the pilgrims gather in the shadow of one of Butte's iconic head frames — giant steel gallows-like structures erected above the entrances to underground mine shafts to support the hoists.

The head frames survive as symbols of the citizens' tenacity.

"The big leap for Butte economically" was the National Folk Festival, said Barbara Miller, project director of Habitat for Humanity Southwest Montana.

"It immediately changed the viewpoint of most of the state about Butte. It totally changed summer in Montana."

Butte was so small, it had seemed an impossible candidate to host such an ambitious event. NCTA's Olin "went out on a limb pretty much by herself" in championing the city's cause, said John Holum, former NCTA board chairman. "She had to talk the board into it."

But Butte had a key asset — one of the nation's most authentic historic districts and the largest by area, Miller noted. "It hasn't been screwed with, because of our economic decline."

Accordingly, Butte's movers and shakers had determined that their salvation lay in tourism. They had tried various events to lure the hordes, including a raucous annual celebration of their most famous native son, stuntman Evel Knievel.

enlivened by the town's open carry liquor law.

But nothing had quite done the trick.

When a National Folk Festival brochure found its way to Butte, city leaders were primed and ready. But securing the million-dollar funding required outside help, Miller said.

"We don't have that kind of money . . . There's extreme poverty, illness because of pollution. Just real heavy burdens."

She and others give special credit to Montana Sen. Jon Sasso, then in the House, who they say nearly "killed himself" to secure funding from the state legislature.

"We have raised and spent \$7.4 million since 2007," Everett said. "We estimate that the festival has resulted in an economic impact of \$190 million over that time period. So we think it's a hugely good investment."

Butte's success has spawned numerous smaller events across the state, Miller said, and also provided a shot in the arm to National Park Service revenues in the area.

Butte leaders credit NCTA's Dwain Winters, the National Festival's virtuosos technical director, for coming up with the vision of incorporating one of Butte's headframes as a kind of grand proscenium arch towering over the festival's main stage and outdoor amphitheater — all built on the vacant mine yard.

Everett described an especially poignant and unexpected benefit:

"We've heard stories of parents almost crying, so moved that their kids were exposed to culture that they never could have afforded." He recalled a survey taken in the local school system that asked,

"What is your favorite music?" The "overwhelming response was 'zydeco.'"

"It was pretty easy to track ... that it was because they'd attended the festival and gotten to see live performances by some of the best in the country" such as Nathan and the Zydeco Cha-Chas.

'Shocking turnout'

The Festival has landed with particular impact in cities that, like Butte, had suffered economic decline, had worked to refurbish their depressed areas, and then had trouble attracting significant numbers of actual people to take advantage of the shiny new venues.

The old mill town of Lowell, Mass., pioneered in this category. Its textile industry had been in decline since the 1920s, and as recently as the 1970s it was known as the most depressed community in the state.

"You could stand anywhere — anywhere — in downtown Lowell, turn 360 degrees and see nothing but blight," said Peter Aucella, a historic preservationist with the Lowell National Historical Park.

He and other town boosters had struggled to refurbish the Lowell infrastructure, to ensure the preservation of its mills, canals and other historic sites, and to establish tours, museums, and other cultural attractions.

What they were missing, however, were significant crowds to take advantage of all this at a time when downtown areas were losing commerce to the suburbs and online services.

People no longer had compelling reasons to go downtown. Getting them back required something special.

Aucella is one of only two surviving Lowell officials who were around for the town's initial toe-dip into the festival game in the mid-1980s that has become, in local lore, near legendary.

It began with a "walk-through" of the downtown area by the local top brass in company with the NCTA's charismatic director, Joe Wilson. (He died in May, 2015.)

"This was very memorable because there were a lot of spots that, until that day, we had never really considered to be performance spaces," Aucella said. "Joe was walking around with us and we were pointing out these places [such as St. Ann's Churchyard, the little Market Street Park, City Hall Plaza], and Joe would say, 'That would be fabulous, it would be perfect!' And we were shaking our heads and saying, 'We really like this guy!'"

At the time, the National had been in an extended residency at the Wolf Trap Center for the Performing Arts in the Virginia suburbs of Washington, DC.

Wilson had recently decided to take it back on the road, first to Ohio and then to New York.

Now, with the NCTA's encouragement, Lowell leaders managed to overcome what Aucella described as a degree of native pessimism about their ability to pull it off.

They won the right to host the National Festival for three years beginning in 1987, with five stages spread throughout the downtown.

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They were immediately overwhelmed by the results.

"The community was pretty much blown away" by the first Festival, Aucella recalled. "The press really didn't get it at first. We had a phenomenal, a shocking turnout. Some of the newspaper reporters who would have covered it were away on their summer vacations. And the Lowell Sun had to call their reporters back," he laughed. "Get back here! You gotta cover this!" It was exhilarating and shocking to the locals."

Lowell just celebrated the festival's 32nd year.

The city has renovated or is reconstructing something like 98 percent of its 5.2 million square feet of abandoned mill space, Aucella said. These settings now serve as office space for high tech, R&D, retail stores, TV studios, theaters and artists' lofts.

People "think they're coming to hear music, maybe try some ethnic food, see some crafts, but they're really taking in your community," seeing the "gorgeous" historic renovations, strolling the cobbled streets, Aucella said.

"It's the proudest moment for this community when that Festival happens. And that has been consistent now for the last 30 years."

The quality, he said, is not just in the performers but in the logistics, which he described in detail:

"We've got armies of people from the city government, the police, fire, public works, parks department, EMTs, special events coordinators, cultural affairs, the city manager — all in lock step with the National Park, and with all our other partners, the non-profit that has to raise money for the Lowell Festival Foundation, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Chamber of Commerce. And the NCTA is a crucial element to this."

He noted that, in advance of the festival, the city paints every crosswalk, repairs the sidewalks, lines up downtown retailers to accommodate the performance stages, which are scattered along the main retail street, "so there's a lot of coordination, a lot of people who can benefit or, conversely, could be very upset, if this isn't done right."

Think about closing all your streets ... in the core of your downtown for two and a half days on a weekend."

"All these people don't just get up and march in lock step for 30 years unless they really are believers that this is a big deal."

U.S. Rep. Niki Tsongas expanded on the sentiment: "As the second largest free folk festival in the United States, the Lowell Folk Festival is an institution and, after 30 years, it has become the standard. By bringing nationally-recognized and celebrated musicians and art-



In Butte, Mont., an abandoned mine yard was transformed into a spectacular concert setting during the National Folk Festival's residency there from 2008 through 2010. NFF PHOTO

ists from all over to our unique corner of America, the festival continues to have a tremendous impact on the Greater Lowell economy and on the community in general."

It is a particular point of pride that the festival reflects the town's proud diversity.

Immigrants, including French Canadian, Polish, Greek, Irish, Armenian, Portuguese, and later Cambodian, Laotian, Vietnamese, Puerto Rican, Columbian and people from throughout Africa, had flocked to Lowell for work in its factories.

"Something like 75 languages are spoken at Lowell High School," Aucella said.

The festival, Tsongas said, is "a vibrant display of America's many cultures and traditions."

Big success in Bangor

Bangor, Maine (population about 33,000), is another small town that rose to a huge challenge.

"The fundraising piece is gigantic," said architect and civic leader John Rohman, a former mayor of Bangor, Maine, and former president of the city's Chamber of Commerce.

He was a leader in the effort, beginning some 17 years ago, to bring the National to Bangor.

"The whole sales pitch of engaging [potential donors] was, frankly, a pretty big leap of faith when they didn't understand what the festival really was."

While the greater Bangor region was doing well economically, he said, the downtown waterfront area was a mess.

Real estate values (and therefore tax revenues) were falling. There was an abandoned railroad yard with piles of old ties, and a defunct meat-packing plant.

Over the years, the city tore down the old plant, cleaned up the land, put in brick sidewalks, new light fixtures, signage, plantings and the like, and eventually added a children's museum and an art museum, but there was nothing to draw heavy traffic to this "blank slate" area — until city leaders discovered the National Folk Festival.

Rohman and his Bangor colleagues made two pitches in support of the Festival — one on the basis of economic development and the other touting "community building," he said.

In the latter category, for Bangor, the festival's diversity was a big selling point, but for an unusual reason.

"We're literally the whitest state in the country. We're about 98 percent white," Rohman said, and lacked exposure to the kinds of ethnic variety the Festival offered. "We owed it to our community to have that."

"There was a significant amount of education that had to happen in the months leading up to that first event," said Heather McCarthy, executive director of the American Folk Festival on the Bangor Waterfront.

"We had a great deal of media interest — how many people will be coming? Honestly, we had no idea."

The organizers had hoped for "maybe 30,000 people," she said. "When we ended up with about 70,000 that first year, it just blew everybody's socks off."

The path to success, including raising the requisite \$2.5 million to \$3 million for the National's three-year stint (2002-2004), was eased by the fact that the city council, engineers and other city officials provided enthusiastic sup-

port, with a "whatever it takes" attitude, she said.

She also credited "our wonderful partnership with the local newspaper" for boosting the Festival.

The Bangor Daily News provided free advertising, printed the schedule of events, sent a reporter to write an in-depth feature and did most of the event's graphic design in the early years.

The newspaper continues to publish a complete program guide of 20 pages or more.

The pay-off, according to a 2003 Festival study, was an economic impact of over \$3.7 million annually. "This represents a 10-to-1 return on the investment in the Festival," the study said.

More recently, a 2011 survey in collaboration with the University of Maine indicated that "the Festival's regional economic impact averages \$15 million annually."

Today, the downtown waterfront has dozens of eateries where before there were a handful, Rohman said.

Retail occupancy has risen from about 50 percent to near 100 percent. There are upwards of 500 apartments and condos in neighborhoods where virtually no one had lived.

"Things have changed dramatically," he said. "And the Festival itself has really been the catalyst that has spurred economic development in the downtown area."

Said McCarthy, "The Festival was able not only to shape the physical development of a big chunk of the city's infrastructure — the waterfront and its affiliated sites — but it was also able to influence the way people think about culture in terms of building community and visitorship."

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The Festival showed people what could happen in a fairly small city ... and it helped spark additional growth in terms of other musical events, other artistic events, and other opportunities for volunteerism. [It's] an impact that certainly exceeds just that one weekend a year."

Dissolving barriers

In fact, Bangor's success helped to inspire the much larger city of Richmond, Va. (population 214,000), to embrace the National Folk Festival.

For Richmond, however, the appeal was never mainly economic.

"The idea was to have an event that would help cement a personality for Richmond," said Lisa Sims, deputy director of Venture Richmond. They wanted an arts event, similar to the one in Spoleto, Italy, that would raise the city's stature as a "cool, creative community. We wanted to move beyond our image as capitol of the Confederacy. Plus, we wanted to energize our riverfront. We visited Bangor to see how they did it."

NCTA's Olin recalls that Richmond's bid for the National started out poorly because of personnel mismatches and other distractions.

"They wasted eight or nine months, and we couldn't get their attention. We finally got down there and had a big meeting, and we presented a list three pages long of all the things they should have done by then."

At that moment, she said, NCTA director Joe Wilson, in his East Tennessee baritone drawl, said, "Well. Who's gonna own this thing?"

After several seconds of silence, Jack Berry, then running an economic development organization called Richmond Renaissance, spoke up: "I will."

Richmond had a bit of an inferiority complex at the time, says Berry. He was "impressed by the authenticity of the festival and its success in other cities, particularly Bangor. I think our major challenge was convincing people that Richmond was capable of such a large endeavor. We'd had some failures in the past, and some of us wondered whether we were even capable of really big things."

The festival, he said, "has changed all that. The scope and quality of the event still astonishes people."

The organizers caught a lucky break when it came to fundraising, they said. The final year of the National, 2007, would coincide with a planned celebration of the 400th anniversary of Richmond's founding.

The Festival supporters convinced the anniversary group to adopt the folk festival as their own. "So we received from this organiza-



Dancers congregate at the 2015 Richmond Folk Festival in Virginia. The commonwealth's capital hosted the 2005-2007 National Folk Festival and then launched its own event in 2008.

tion and their sponsors \$750,000 a year from 2005 through 2007," Sims said. "It was a tremendous gift, an unheard of shot in the arm."

The Richmond Times Dispatch provided "incredible coverage, in-depth front-page articles and other support," she noted.

The good fortune did not extend to the weather. The first year, 2005, "it rained sideways for three days," Sims said.

"It was a mud bath. Horrific. We were utterly demoralized, felt like we'd been socked in the stomach."

But even that turned out to be lucky in the long run, she said, because the downpour provided the organizers a kind of heads up.

"We would not have been prepared for the subsequent crowds. [Even with the rain, with a turnout of 50,000] we had a very difficult time just keeping up in terms of volunteers, and lines, all the logistics that you need to have in place. We just weren't ready, but by the second year, we were."

Now, in a good-weather year, the festival easily attracts as many as 200,000 people.

One of the festival's most profound effects in Richmond, a city in some ways still divided by echoes of the Civil War, is the way it has dissolved barriers — between young and old, rich and poor, and especially among the races.

At first it was, said Sims, "a lot of white hair and a lot of white people", or as Berry put it, "the granaola and NPR crowd."

Changing that took concerted efforts by the organizers. They brought in performers such as "Godfather of Go-Go" Chuck Brown and, more recently, Grandmaster Flash to attract a younger, more diverse crowd. They came in droves.

"The festival is the most diverse thing that happens in our community," said Jim Ukrop of New

Richmond Ventures, former CEO of Ukrop Supermarkets, who is widely credited with being a champion fundraiser for the festival.

The event "has brought the well-to-do suburbs and, yes, the poorest people together. ... It brings Asian, Hispanic, black, white. This is the one time there is something for everybody."

The festival has also "pulled down a lot of walls that people used to feel around the arts," in a way that Richmond's ballet, opera and acclaimed Museum of Fine Arts had not managed, Sims said.

"And it has brought people to a part of the town where many of them had never been, along the banks of the James River. They could see how beautiful the riverfront and the downtown were. They saw they could park, and they weren't going to get mugged."

Also, by prompting a corporate donation of riverfront property worth \$3 million, Berry said, the festival has opened up to the public more land that was previously private.

The result of all this, every October, is a joyous multicultural scene of celebration around the riverfront site of the Tredegar Iron Works, which once made cannons for the Confederacy and is now a historic landmark.

The festival is "one of the most important things that Richmond has done in a generation," said Berry. "It's a tradition now and I can't imagine Richmond without it."

Said Sims, when strangers find out she is involved with the event, "they suddenly melt, they rave. 'Oh, my god, that's the best thing that happens here every year.'"

The NCTA's most recent Festival triumph is the university town of Greensboro, N.C., which attracted a crowd estimated at 162,000 in 2017, its third year, and is planning a sequel for next fall. "The

audiences were the most diverse, by every measure, in the Festivals' history," Olin noted. "Everybody came!"

In a blog for the Greensboro Swarm, Doug Clark, a self-professed conservative WASP, echoed that observation, confessing that the event had altered some of his long-held attitudes.

He marveled not only about the exotic choices of music — from Portuguese fado singing to Andean dancing to East African rhythms, and so on — but about the thrill of simply walking among the racially and ethnically mixed crowds and feeling at one with them. ... how natural it all was. How enjoyable. Wow, I told my wife, I am changing."

"These Festivals are always about quality of life," Olin said. "Generally, when we put out [the request for proposals], what the Convention and Visitors Bureau people think about is 'heads in beds,' right?"

And cities think about revitalizing their downtown, and making it a place that is attracting new businesses, and new cultural activity. So it is about vibrancy and vitality as well as money. All these things go hand in hand."

Said Salisbury's mayor, "I ran for office talking about this community's self-esteem and how we've always been our own worst enemies," but he said this has been changing in recent years.

"I think this will be another moment when we can get past some of those hurdles, when you get a big crowd of people, a celebratory moment, right in the heart of the city, it's hard to deny it. We can do this!"

Kathy Sawyer is a member of the NCTA Board of Directors. She was a writer for the Washington Post for 28 years and before that covered the music industry in Nashville for The Tennessean newspaper.