

MARYLAND

'Salisbury deserved this': National Folk Festival succeeds in year one

Meg Ryan The Daily Times

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While dark clouds stayed over Salisbury throughout the weekend, it didn't dampen the attendance or spirit of the National Folk Festival, officials said.

The 78th National Folk Festival wrapped up its first year in Salisbury on Sept. 9. Over three days, the free festival brought more than 350 artists including musicians, dancers, storytellers and craftspeople to downtown Salisbury. More than 25 different musical groups are performing on seven outdoor stages.

The festival, produced by the National Council for the Traditional Arts, will stay in the city through 2020.

With the weekend's weather forecast including rain every day of the festival, Mayor Jake Day said the event's overall attendance numbers exceeded expectations.

"Salisbury kind of surprised me," Day said.

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While numbers are still being tallied, he said the city expects to see Friday's and Saturday's attendance past its expected numbers. Sunday's attendance is expected to hit below expectation with the constant rain showers.

The festival saw little issues with law enforcement and injuries. Day said the only police issue was an unauthorized person driving a golf cart. The event saw only a few injuries, with two people transported to Peninsula Regional Medical Center on Friday for heat exhaustion, Day said.

While Day would have loved to see a dry weekend, he was ecstatic with the positive feedback he'd heard from attendees.

"Somehow, somehow they showed up," he said.

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Day said what he heard most was how impressed attendees were with the musical talent and how smooth the logistical elements of the event went.

"Salisbury deserved this," Day said was his favorite comment of the weekend.

Frank Layton of Salisbury attended the festival primarily to see The Quebe Sisters, a Texas fiddling and western swing group.

"I've been here everyday," he said.

Layton said he'd been enjoying the festival and joked his only request for next year was to see The Quebe Sisters back on the lineup.

Parletta Davis of Bedford County, Pennsylvania, said she's been waiting for the festival weekend as she's seen billboards for it driving back and forth to Chincoteague Island.

Davis attended Saturday and Sunday of the festival.

"We've loved it," she said.

Davis said she'd return for next year's festival. Her only request was more clarification on the festival map of which stages were covered and more details on parking.

Day said the city of Salisbury is already beginning to plan how to improve next year's festival. Much of the logistical plan will stay the same as it worked effectively this year, but other portions of the event will see changes.

"We've got a little work to do," he said.

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Day said the festival plans on making larger signs, especially for the designated golf cart lanes to keep pedestrians out to avoid injuries. Parking restrictions could also change as much of the closer, available parking did not fill up the way officials thought it could.

Alcohol sale points will increase from three to five, he said, as many attendees want to be able to find beer and wine with more ease. Rearranging the festival map will also be a priority as building continues downtown and some stages will need to be relocated.

Attendance to next year's festival is expected to double, and possibly even more than double, Day said. With year one being such a success with rain, the mayor wondered what the city could have seen with a sunny weekend.

However, even through the gray clouds, a bright spirit in downtown Salisbury shined through.

"I'm happy with Salisbury," Day said.

Day one coverage: National Folk Festival kicks off with Treme Brass Band parade

Day two coverage: National Folk Festival doesn't slow down with rainy Saturday

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