**Celebrate 2023 Overview**

**Summary Narrative:**

The arrival of Hurricane Lee during the Celebrate weekend posed a few challenges. Watching the projected landfall, we moved the date to Sunday. Further, as a precaution we pushed the parade start time back incase there was significant road cleanup that might require staff to respond into Sunday morning. Fortunately, damage was minimal and staffing needs were still met. Two food trucks, Dr. Drew with his animals, and the magician could not make the rain date. Also, two exhibitors dropped out but we also had two last minute additional vendors join. Further, a last-minute Recreation Department BBQ helped alleviate the long food truck lines. The bands were flexible with the curtailed schedule and all the events went on except for lobster crate race, which was canceled in advance for fear of significant debris floating down the river. Further, the venue offers local organizations a chance to fundraise. Below you’ll find a summary of the shared revenue with community organizations along with results of our participant survey.

**Shared revenue with Community Organizations:**

This event offers a venue for several organizations to raise funds for many causes. As always, the community support poured into the numerous charities drives which included the Masonic Lodge and the Electa Chapter #2 Order of the Eastern Star which hosted a tag sale to benefit the Dempsy Center and ALS research. Banana Banners hosted a Jimmy Fund fundraising booth and joining us for the first time was Dogwill, the pet assistance program associated with the food pantry. Also, the Town provided parade prizes (including a $100 prize each for the first 10 Bowdoinham-based organizations to sign up), donations to volunteer groups, allowed use of the dunk tank, and a silent auction, which helped raise the following funds for local community organizations:

Bowdoinham Food Pantry: The Town donated $300 in pie contest prizes and gave them a $100 early sign-up parade participation prize. Their Celebrate pie sales raised $780.

Mt. Ararat Senior Class: The Town made a $1,000 donation to the volunteers which ran the children’s activities and rented the dunk tank for them which raised an additional $350.

Bowdoinham Fire and Rescue: The Town donated $500 for their volunteer work during the event.

Nazarene Church and Bowdoinham Republican Party also received $100 each for their early sign-up parade participation prizes. The Bowdoinham Library was awarded $250 for their parade contest ranking.

Recreation Department held a fundraiser BBQ that netted $1,000.

Old Town Hall raised $1,662 in the silent auction.

**Participant Survey:**

The event hosted 24 exhibits with a mix of informational booth ranging from KELT, BCDI, Snowbirds, elected leaders, and several town committees and the craft showcase. Crafters included some first-time participants and many repeat vendors selling everything from beanie babies, quilts, holiday décor, jewelry, glassware, to handmade cornhole sets. 7 participants or 22% responded to a post-event survey which included two performers, three crafters, and two food vendors.

Regarding participation trends. 6 of 7 respondents were returning participants which indicated that on average there was about the same or slightly less participation seen than in years past.

Respondents reported the numbers of visitors ranging from 15-190+. More than half reported having 50 or more, two reported between 15-20, and two others reported between 175-190. Those with the highest numbers were food vendors which were reporting the number of transactions.

When asked if their sales/engagement goals were met all but two responded affirmatively. Performers and a crafter met expectations, food vendors exceeded expectations, and two of the three craft exhibits reported to be on the low side.

When asked what did you like most about this years' event praise included:

*“It was a great day, the flexibility and thoughtfulness in planning the plan b day.”;*

*“Good variety of booths.”;*

*“Sunday seemed to have more children involved, maybe due to the lack of sports/other activities on that day.”;*

*“Helpful staff, diversity of vendors and entertainment, cost to attend good, beauty of the area was great.”;*

*“Variety of activities for the kids.”; “That you had the event.”*

Some areas we could improve on included:

*“More food options.”;*

*“Get a committee together to organize and work on making the parade longer and getting more groups involved.”;*

*“Face painting and animal balloons early in the day.”;*

*“Picnic tables near river to eat the food.”;*

*“As a craft vendor, I feel vendors might do better in the center of the tent area closer to the food vs on the far end by the exit to the road. I noticed far less families walking past craft vendors.”;*

*“Electrical upgrades for food trucks, more infrastructure planning for food trucks at the new park too.”*

On a scale of 1-10 vendors ranked the communication skills of our staff for the event: 9.43/10.

There was an option to provide additional feedback which produced the following comments:

*“Great first year Yvette, can't see what you can do next year.”;*

*“Given the one day delay, I thought it all went very well.”;*

*“Yvette, you did an amazing job!! Especially since it was your first Celebrate and having to reschedule!!”; “Appreciated more room by the stage for fire performance. Great crowd!”;*

*“It was nice meet everyone. All around friendly and fun atmosphere, great music.”;*

*“I am grateful for the swift decision to move the celebration to Sunday. I feel it worked out quite well for everyone despite the severe weather on Saturday.”*