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Tulip Time Generates \$12.9 Million in New Economic Activity

In 2015, the Tulip Time Festival generated \$12.9 million of new economic activity in the Holland area according to an economic impact study released this week.

The study, completed in partnership with Anderson Economic Group, examines the economic benefits of the Tulip Time Festival on the Holland area as well as an attendee profile. Funding for this project was supported by the Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area, the Michigan West Coast Chamber of Commerce as well as Tulip Time. Surveys were used to collect data during the 8-day festival which ran from May 2-9, 2015.

Overall attendance is estimated at 500,000. Since Tulip Time is an un-gated festival taking place throughout the City of Holland, it is difficult to measure attendance. Reported ticket purchase data was utilized to estimate ticketed attendees at 310,000. The overall attendance number takes into consideration survey results indicating Dutch Dance, Parades, Art & Craft Fair and Fireworks are among the most popular events, all of which are free, non-ticketed activities.

Attendees of all ages are drawn to the festival, but notably, 69% of all visitors represent a pre-retirement demographic. This indicates an influx of younger attendees, therefore broadening the demographics historically represented at the festival. "While the festival just celebrated its 86th year in 2015, it is extremely challenging, yet essential, that our programming decisions are relevant," states Gwen Auwerda, Tulip Time Executive Director. "We must continue to seek out new and trending ways to celebrate our Dutch heritage and beautiful tulips so that they are enjoyed by visitors of all ages."

Tulip Time attracts visitors from throughout Michigan and the U. S., contributing to the increased awareness of the entire region. Over 18% of attendees came from the Holland area, 44% were from elsewhere in Michigan, and 38% were from outside the state. Of the total visitors surveyed, 56% were first time attendees to the festival. Further, 66% planned to return to Tulip Time or West Michigan for other recreational activities. "Tulip Time Festival is a perfect example of how major events can drive travel to Michigan, promote unique cultural experiences and provide important economic benefits to our communities" said Dave Lorenz, Vice President of Travel Michigan, part of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation. "It takes a tremendous effort by the staff, local businesses and volunteers to put on an event of the caliber of Tulip Time. The impact of this hard work and hospitality can be seen in the high number of visitors planning to return to Tulip Time and the region."

Attendees drawn to the festival from outside of the state generate additional travel and lodging related revenue. “Everyone in the community understands that Tulip Time has a substantial impact, but this study proves the immense overall value of the festival,” states Peter Beukema, Visionary/Chief Operating Officer of Suburban Inns. “Not only does Tulip Time have a positive financial impact, but the national and international exposure to potential visitors is invaluable.” Suburban Inns is currently constructing a hotel in downtown Holland set to open this fall.

The festival’s impact is felt beyond those businesses directly related to travel. “Fifth Third Bank has partnered with Tulip Time for over 50 years. The festival has a tremendous impact on our community – both individuals and businesses. We recognize how closely our success is linked to the strength and vitality of the larger community and we applaud Tulip Time for organizing this annual celebration that directly benefits this great place where we work, live and play,” states Scott Lubbers, Fifth Third Bank Community President/Holland.

In addition to the study results, Tulip Time also released information on the organization’s funding and spending for the year. Tulip Time, which operates as a 501(c)(3) non-profit, is funded primarily through revenues collected from ticketed events (59%), sponsorship dollars (37%), and the sale of merchandise (4%). Conversely, the vast majority of festival spending is directly related to programming, which includes both ticketed and free events (69%), with the balance funding operations (28%), and merchandise (2%).

Tulip Time partners with an array of local community non-profit groups including local art and culture organizations on the production of shows, food and beverage related services, festival ambassadors staffing information booths, church groups and various ministries that supply services in exchange for the opportunity to raise funds for their organizations. In 2015, Tulip Time gave back over \$89,000 to these community partners.

The results of the Anderson Economic Group study are being released at sessions hosted by Tulip Time on September 18 and 21, 2015. The full report is available at www.tuliptime.com/econimpact.

Tulip Time 2016 will be held May 7 – 14. Information on all upcoming events and ticket sales will be available in October. Please consult www.tuliptime.com for complete details.

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