



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **The 78<sup>th</sup> National Folk Festival Draws 63,000 Attendees to Downtown Salisbury**

SALISBURY – Mayor Jake Day, National Folk Festival Local Manager Caroline O'Hare, and the National Council for the Traditional Arts are excited to announce that attendance estimates have been tallied, and the National Folk Festival in Salisbury, Maryland drew approximately 63,000 attendees in its inaugural year.

"It's an unequivocal success," said Mayor Jake Day. "We expected to draw record crowds Downtown over the course of the weekend, and we did. The fact that there were so many attendees in spite of all that rain just makes it even more impressive."

Crowd estimates were made by analyzing a number of different data sources. To get preliminary crowd counts, images from cameras mounted at all stages and tents were used, as was drone footage.

For the first time at a large event in Salisbury, the City's Information Services Department used cell phone data to track unique ID's, making for a more accurate headcount than was previously possible.

"For the festival, we deployed an enterprise mesh Wi-Fi system across the entire footprint," said Information Services Director Bill Garrett. "We had antennas at every stage, the Marketplace, the Family Area, and select other locations. The goal was to provide festivalgoers with a reliable, high-speed Internet service for use during the event. We were excited to see an increase in bandwidth usage of 1,750% compared to the prior 3 weekends, with the majority of traffic being to social media as people livestreamed and posted.

"This system has an analytical component allowing us to track all users within range of the antennas. Even if the user doesn't use our Wi-Fi, as long as they are within range the system sends a constant stream of offers to use our system. The mobile device, as long as Wi-Fi is

enabled, reports that it received this offer. That lets us know the total number of devices in range at any time that were seen by the system.

“We pulled a total of devices connected for a minimum of 5 uninterrupted minutes in order to account for any traffic or passersby that were not attending the festival. Across the entire weekend, we detected just under 100,000 devices across the footprint that met these criteria. Using a standard deviation formula for the sample, we were able to account for the outlying fringes; those without mobile devices such as small children, or those with multiple Wi-Fi enabled devices on them such as multiple phones, smart watches, and the like. We then used the historical information for number of devices seen in this footprint over the prior 3 weeks since we deployed the hardware, in order to eliminate all devices that belong to businesses, residences, the medical centers within range, and people who work in the area each weekend from our total. While the total attendance number also accounts for volunteers and employees, and is in no way perfect, it provides us a very good estimation of the total attendance over the 3-day festival.”

“I have been involved in the launch of many festivals and can attest that, weather notwithstanding, the 78<sup>th</sup> National Folk Festival was a glorious event,” stated NCTA Executive Director Julia Olin. “The overwhelming enthusiasm of audiences has created such a buzz that I expect attendance will more than double in 2019.”

“In the first year,” Olin also noted, “it is not unusual to experience quite a few organizational and logistical ‘bumps.’ This was the smoothest-running first-year festival that I have ever experienced. My hat is off to Salisbury!”

Local Folk Festival Director, Caroline O’Hare said, “It was just amazing to see our community come together, welcome new visitors, and celebrate – rain or shine. We’re a strong City with a big heart, and we will continue to shine into years 2, 3, and beyond.”

“We’re on cloud 9,” said Mayor Day. “Maybe a little tired, still – but very, very pleased with the success of the event. I can’t wait until next year.”

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#### **About the 78th National Folk Festival in Salisbury, 2018**

Produced by the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) and the City of Salisbury, with a host of local, state and national partners and supporters, the National Folk Festival begins its three-year residency in downtown Salisbury this year, its 78th year, from September 7 – 9, 2018. The FREE, three-day event is America’s longest-running festival of traditional arts; celebrating the best of nation and best of Maryland, it will set the stage for a continuing festival in 2021, after the “National” moves on.

#### **About the National Folk Festival**

Since it was first presented in St. Louis in 1934, the National Folk Festival, the NCTA’s flagship event, has celebrated the roots, richness, and variety of American culture. Championed in its early years by Eleanor Roosevelt, it was the first event of national stature to present the arts of many nations, races, and languages on equal footing. It was also the first to

present to the public musical forms such as the blues, Cajun music, polka, Tex-Mex *conjunto*, Peking Opera, and many others. Today, the National is an exuberant traveling festival, produced by the NCTA in partnership with communities around the country, that embraces the diverse cultural expressions that define us as a people in the 21st century. [www.nationalfolkfestival.com](http://www.nationalfolkfestival.com)

#### **About the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA)**

A leading non-profit in the field, the National Council for the Traditional Arts (NCTA) is dedicated to the presentation and documentation of folk and traditional arts in the U.S. Stressing excellence and authenticity, the NCTA presents the nation's finest traditional artists in major festivals, tours, concerts, workshops, demonstrations, exhibitions, media productions, school programs, cross-cultural exchanges, and other activities. It works in partnership with American communities to establish new, sustainable traditional arts events that deliver lasting social, cultural, and economic benefits. Over 7,000 hours of the NCTA's archival audio recordings dating from the 1930s are permanently housed at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The NCTA champions the interests of folk and traditional artists and organizations in the arena of public policy. [www.ncta-usa.org](http://www.ncta-usa.org)

#### **About the City of Salisbury, Maryland**

Founded in 1732, Salisbury is the county seat of Wicomico County, a place where John Smith touched land in 1608 during his exploration of the Chesapeake Bay. Situated on Maryland's historic Eastern Shore at the crossroads of the Delmarva Peninsula, Salisbury is now one of the region's largest cities, and serves as the capital of the Eastern Shore, a rural area defined by its agricultural and maritime traditions, landscapes, and industries. The Chesapeake Bay is central to this distinctive identity. Though a relatively small city, Salisbury is the geographic and economic hub of one of the nation's fastest-growing Metropolitan Statistical Areas. Led by a dynamic mayor, the City of Salisbury is working to build its reputation as an arts and culture destination, and is aligning its downtown development and revitalization efforts with the arts. Salisbury believes hosting the National Folk Festival is the perfect catalyst to further a cultural renaissance and urban renewal. [www.salisbury.md](http://www.salisbury.md)