



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information:

Jeff Martinelli
Butler County Tourism & Convention Bureau
Public Relations and Communications
724-234-4619
Jeff@VisitButlerCounty.com

FESTIVALS AND FAIRS DRIVE LARGE POSITIVE IMPACT TO BUTLER COUNTY ECONOMY Nine Community Events Bring in More Than \$16M to County Economy

(ZELIENOPLE, Pa., July 14, 2022): When the nine-day Big Butler Fair closed this past Saturday it brought to an end a local Butler County economic juggernaut. Now, hundreds of motorcycle enthusiasts are expected to roll into the Butler Farm Show Grounds for the Second Annual Butler Bikes & BBQ on Friday, July 22.

A day earlier, on Thursday, July 21, Zelenople will host its 58th Annual Horse Trading Days, three-days of events, a 5K, concerts – including a closing-night show by Gaelic Storm – and food and drink vendors.

Organizers are counting on attendees to have enthusiastic mindsets, empty stomachs, and their wallets. While these summer events are huge on civic pride, make no mistake that the financial incentives associated with these events are impressive.

“Local tourism – meaning people that travel from 50 to 150 miles – is a big industry,” said Jack Cohen, President of the Butler County Tourism & Convention Bureau (BCTCB). “Events, like fairs and festivals, not only have the potential to generate lots of revenue, but ancillary businesses receive exposure which, in turn, generates customers year round.”

Butler County fairs, festivals, rallies, and other such multi-day events certainly seem to be winning Blue Ribbons. According to a 2019 report by the BCTCB, it is estimated that six multi-day events all had a local economic impact in excess of more than a million dollars in 2018, with the Big Butler Fair ranking first at \$5.5 million. Combined, the nine largest events in the county account for more than \$16.5 million.

The Butler Farm Show, held annually in August, ranked second on the report with an impact of \$3.3 million. Figures for the Bantam Jeep Heritage Festival, which is held in June, were not complete because lodging numbers were unavailable. Still, the festival, which has grown extensively over the past decade, has shown an impact of at least \$1.8 million.

Even events that weren’t originally aimed for audiences which would make more than a 50-mile trip have made a large impact. Zelenople’s Horse Trading Days and Cranberry Township’s Community Days have estimated impacts upward of \$1.5 million.

“That’s pretty significant, but it doesn’t really surprise me,” said Matthew Edwards, Executive Director of the Zelenople Area Business Association, and who has been working on Horse Trading Days since 2015. “This

will be our 58th year so I'm sure there are a lot people saying 'hey, they've been doing this a long time, we should check it out.'"

Edwards says organizers of Horse Trading Days and similar festivals and fairs have a major responsibility to the history of the event while trying to improve each year.

"We walk a fine line in taking public input and working to grow so that we can be doing this the next 50 years," he said. "But there are certain traditions and we may make a decision that doesn't speak to the overall financial success but is too important to our heritage to ignore. If you throw those things to the wayside, you're doing a disservice to the community."

Live music is also effective in helping attract a larger audience. That's why Cohen made sure to line up Shady Lady Productions of Sarver, Pa., to develop a full slate of musicians for Butler Bikes & BBQ, which includes legendary rocker Lita Ford.

The Horse Trading Days committee understands music's muscle, too. Bringing in bigger named musical acts, explained Edwards, expands the geographical range of the audience and increases exposure for Zelenople.

"That is the whole reason for taking a leap of faith and bringing in Gaelic Storm," he said. "We've sold tickets to people in Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia, and eastern Pennsylvania. The goal in the past was to draw people from Pittsburgh or maybe Erie."

And, like Cohen said, Edwards sees those Gaelic Storm fans returning in future years to become recurring customers of Burgh'ers Brewing, Della Terra, Shubrew, Eva Bryn Shoetique, and many other Zelenople businesses.

"We believe we have something very special here," Edwards said. "Those future customers will see that when they come here and they'll see how cool it is. And they'll be back."