



For Immediate Release
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Record Crowd Makes It Official: RivahFest's A Tappahannock Tradition

Tappahannock, VA (June 18, 2007) – Now in its fifth year, RivahFest has achieved the status of a local tradition. Saturday's event in downtown Tappahannock drew thousands of area residents and visitors from as far as northern Virginia, North Carolina and even California. Repeat attendees were easy to spot. They rode the shuttle buses and came prepared with water bottles, sunscreen, tote bags and comfortable walking shoes.

"I'm not surprised that people came back, brought their friends and families, and made a day of it," said RivahFest Chair Tyler Lowery. "Folks seemed to have a really great time. I had many comments from visitors and vendors about how well organized things were and how helpful all of the volunteers were."

The fifth annual event was sponsored by the Tappahannock-Essex County Chamber of Commerce to stimulate community pride, tourism and economic development. An initial estimate by the organizing committee put the RivahFest crowd at 15,000 or more, topping all previous records.

"Not only does RivahFest put the spotlight on Tappahannock and Essex County in a way that everyone can enjoy, it also has brought business and community leaders together around a common goal," said Chamber President Liz Martin. "I think we're seeing that our town and

county are benefiting from the strength of these relationships far beyond the third Saturday in June.”

In addition to Lowery, the steering committee included Tom Bradshaw, David Broad, John Clickener, Katherine Newman, Libbie Franklin, Glenn Morse and Sharon James.

The day-long festival was highlighted by a number of contests that added to the excitement. A shootout between Essex and Middlesex High School golf teams started off the Rappahannock River Hole-in-One Challenge. The team leader for Essex was Sims Ryland and the runner-up was David Jensen Woodford.

The RivahFest Croaker Tournament, sponsored by June Parker Marina, awarded cash prizes in a variety of categories. In the Junior division, Sawyer Barksdale of Mechanicsville landed the largest fish (1 lbs. 4.97 oz.) and Logan Payton from Bumpass, VA was the runner-up. Margaret Swassy of Bumpass swept the women’s division with the largest (2 lbs. 1.86 oz) and Lynn Schlesinger from Tappahannock was the runner-up. The largest croaker overall, (2 lbs. 6.13 oz.) was caught by Chuck Morris of Millers Tavern, who also won the men’s division.

The Tappahannock Da Vinci Code Treasure Trail was won by Mary Alice Passagaluppi of Tappahannock. She successfully answered all twelve clues to win the contest’s grand prize of \$500. There were over fifty participants in the contest.

Back by popular demand, the fourth annual RivahFest Idol competition attracted a large and enthusiastic audience to the St. Margaret’s Hall stage as 10 young singers competed for the \$500 cash prize awarded by Riverside Tappahannock Hospital and sponsor Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield. Mackenzie Wilson, 14, of Greenville NC, clinched the Idol crown with her performance of Elvis Presley’s “Hound Dog.” Jasmine Ashton, 14, took second place performing

Whitney Houston's "The Greatest Love." Both singers presented an encore between sets in the main stage show by The Band of Oz.

More than 100 volunteers staffed RivahFest committees to coordinate activities that included more than 200 vendors selling arts, crafts, antiques and other unique merchandise; a food court; a wine and beer garden; horse-drawn carriage rides; a Captain Thomas river cruise; crab races; walking tours of historic Tappahannock; a car show that included antiques, street rods and pulling tractors; an expanded display boats, personal watercraft and ATV's; and children's games and attractions.

In addition to The Band of Oz, a wide variety of entertainment featured the local favorite Page Wilson and Reckless Abandon, gospel, pop and alternative rock artists.

"People make RivahFest possible," said Lowery, "and we really appreciate the hard work of our area chairs and their committees. We could not have done it without folks like Phil Stinchcomb, Katherine Newman, David Broad, Glenn Morse, Bruce Thomas, Len Stewart, Kathy Kirila, Peyton Guest, Jennifer Lowery, Dale Bonhaus, Terry Brooks, Marsha Wadsworth, George and Sandy Longest, Liz and Pat Martin, and Suzanne Rennolds."

Local law enforcement authorities readily handled this year's RivahFest crowd, which was spread across a festival area that included much of downtown Tappahannock and the campus of St. Margaret's School. While they were clearly enjoying themselves, participants did so responsibly.

"The support we received from the Town of Tappahannock and Essex County was absolutely great," Lowery said. "They have been 100 percent behind RivahFest from start to finish, which meant we had a safe, clean, accessible event for our citizens and visitors. I can't say enough about the support we had from the Tappahannock Police Department, Essex County

Sheriff's Office, Essex County Public Schools, the staff and volunteers of Lifecare Medical Transport, Inc., and from all of the county and town employees."

Next year's RivahFest is tentatively slated for June 21, 2007. Comments from this year's festivalgoers are encouraged and will help make RivahFest 2008 an outstanding event. To complete a RivahFest 2007 evaluation and enter to win a RivahFest souvenir, go to www.rivahfest.com.