

Bluffton Village Festival

Written by Editor

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One Saturday each spring, the normally subdued streets of Old Towne Bluffton explode with excitement. Set for May 7th, the Bluffton Village Festival is now in its 38th year, and like last year, record-breaking attendance is a big likelihood.

Originally known as “Mayfest,” the once modest street fair has matured into a huge regional attraction for folks of all ages. It’s a fun-filled, arts and crafts fair which features over 200 local artisans and vendors, live music and performances, and some amazing food and beverages. Attendees delight at the sight of their friends, neighbors, and even a few local ‘celebrities’ whose faces are covered ear-to-ear with fruit and filling from the annual pie eating contest. The ugly dog contest provides a copious amount of cuteness, and is considered one of the original contests of its type in the nation. The festival wouldn’t be complete without the fantastic food, including the celebrated shrimp salad sandwiches made by the ladies from the Church of the Cross. You have to arrive early to get one - they always sell out no matter how much they make!

The intention is big fun for the whole family, but there’s a more serious objective. Organized by the Bluffton Rotary Club, the festival’s enduring success enables the group to raise large amounts of money that go to support vital local organizations. For example, Bluffton Police department vehicles are now equipped with life-saving portable AEDs (Automatic External defibrillators) thanks to the record 20,000 people who attended the street fair last year. Proceeds also benefit other Rotary Club projects, like the Happy Feet project that provides good shoes for children in need, the Backpack Buddies program that feeds hungry students, and educational scholarships and recognition programs for students who excel in school.

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There is a legacy of leadership that has piloted the Bluffton Village Festival to become such



a popular event. Dot Jeger is a past president of the Rotary Club and has worked on organizing the festival for the past 4 years. Jeger says that the event keeps growing because it is so carefully planned and executed - even the vendors are carefully curated. *“Our one-day, rain-or-shine format discourages ‘professional’ fair vendors who travel from festival to festival to sell mass-produced wares. It gives local artists and food vendors, both new and seasoned, a chance to present things that have a distinctly local flavor. That means that we sometimes have to turn away vendors, but this kind of firm leadership is one of the reasons the festival keeps growing.*

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The Bluffton Village Festival takes thousands of man-hours of work, and the hard work certainly pays off as the event grows in popularity. Even though there are vendors and commercial sponsors, the festival is the antithesis of a commercialized fair. You can spend the entire day making unforgettable family memories without ever spending a dime. Thanks to the leadership of the members of the Bluffton Rotary Club, the festival exudes a laid-back attitude and reflects the ambience and unique qualities of Bluffton.

Admission to the festival is free, and it starts at 10 AM on Saturday, May 7th. For more information or to volunteer, call 843-815-2277, visit blufftonvillagefestival.com, like us on Facebook or email

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