



# 2019 FONDUE FEST IMPACT

The annual Downtown Fond du Lac Fondue Fest attracted 25,000 visitors (based on police estimates) in 2019 and the weather was a perfect 70 degrees and sunny. The annual downtown Fall Festival began in 2000, when downtown merchants wanted to celebrate the reopening of Main Street following a lengthy construction project. Shops put sales on the street, and other vendors were invited. Since then, the festival has grown exponentially in every aspect: participation, attractions and attendance.

In 2007 the festival was given a new name – Downtown Fond du Lac Fondue Fest – and it attracted more than 15,000 attendees. The centerpiece for the festival became the World’s Largest Fondue Set, which was created by an engineering and fabrication team from Brenner Tank. The “World’s Largest” name was conferred by the Guinness Book of World Records and presented to the Downtown Fond du Lac Partnership. This re-styled event attracted visitors and vendors from throughout the Midwest and was covered by media outlets from throughout Wisconsin and the Chicago Sun-Times. The festival was even covered nationally by CNN. Blogs and other Internet media sources provided additional buzz. The event was a great success and raised more than \$3,000 for the Fond du Lac AC Agribusiness Council.

In 2019 Moraine Park Technical College Culinary Arts Program was back with cheese and chocolate fondue on the corner of Division and Main and the Noon Optimist Club served queso and pizza fondue on the corner of 1st and Main. In addition to live music, the festival also offered the second annual fondue eating competitions on the Young Professionals of FDL North Stage. The Kids Zone was open from 9-2 for bouncing and climbing or petting and Play-Dough making. The day served as a fundraiser for numerous non-profits and included the Big Race! Family-Friendly Scavenger Hunt benefiting Fond du Lac area kids and the 3rd Annual "Cheese And Quackers 500" Rubber Duckie Raffle and Duck Chuck raising \$4,650 for Salute the Troops, which was a 32% increase over last year.

## VISITOR PROFILE

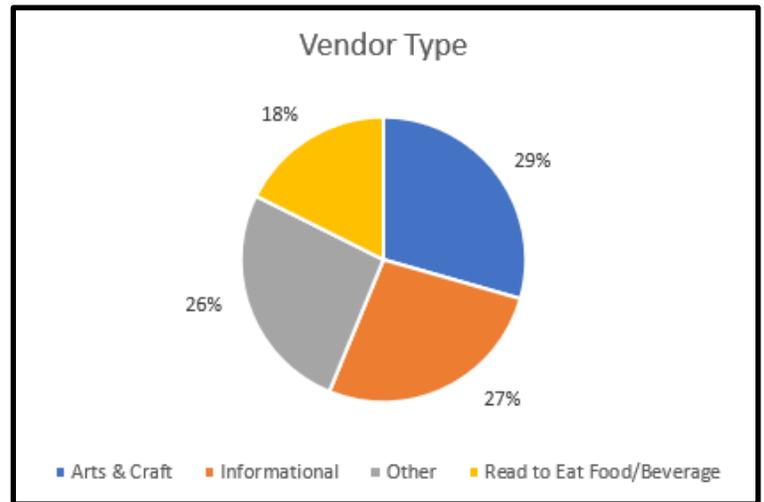
Police estimate that 25,000 individuals attended the event. Only a small number of participants (48) were surveyed. Using information from the survey and data from similar events statewide, the following visitor profile was developed. A majority (70%) of visitors are from Fond du Lac and the immediately surrounding area. An additional (17%) traveled from the broader region (10-60 miles distant), while the four percent traveled from elsewhere in the state and the remaining (9%) from another state. Most attendees had never participated in the event, with about (62%) new attendees.

Returning visitors spent slightly more at the event (\$40 versus \$37 average). Returning visitors also spent more at downtown business while in town for the event (\$56 versus \$22 average).

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## BUSINESS PROFILE

In total, 221 vendors participated in the event. These included a mix of prepared food, produce, artisan and resale goods, and businesses and nonprofits. Unsurprisingly given the nature of the event, prepared food vendors reported the highest earnings, with an average gross sale of \$3,139 per vendor, although actual sales ranged from \$1,100 to \$9,100. Other artisan and produce vendors earned significantly less, averaging \$513 with a range of \$45 to \$2,000 over the course of the event. 28% of vendors were businesses and nonprofits that were not offering direct sales of goods at the event and subsequently sales by these businesses are not included in impact estimates.



Based on a survey of 71 participating vendors, the event was successful, with 97% of vendors indicating that they were able to interact with attendees, and 92% reporting that attendees represented their target demographic. 85% report an intention to return in future years. Only seven vendors indicated that they felt the fees were too high, and a few others felt that the congestion made it difficult for set up and take down.

## SPENDING

When combining the reported customer spending information and vendor sales data, total estimated spending as part of the event (sales at the event, funds raised by the Big Race! Family -Friendly Scavenger Hunt, spending at downtown businesses during the event, and resulting from travel to the event) are estimated to be \$1.5 million. Considering the additional wages earned by vendors, value of volunteer labor and additional spending multipliers, the impact on the region is estimated to be \$1.7 million.

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