



*For Immediate Release:  
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## **Oktoberfest celebration generates \$15 million for local economy**

La Crosse, Wis. – Research conducted by the Economics Department at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater during Oktoberfest in 2014 has found that the annual fall festival in La Crosse generates a total annual economic impact of \$15 million and is the source of more than 200 jobs.

The Whitewater study was one of three research studies authorized by La Crosse Festivals, Inc. during 2014 to determine the financial effect of the festival. The studies also looked at attitudes festival attendees have towards various Oktoberfest events.

Going back to its earliest days, photos and stories abound of the large crowds of people who attended Oktoberfest. Festival halls and grounds were full of people of all ages. You could not find an empty space along either parade route. However, a fundamental question always remained. What impact does Oktoberfest have on local economy?

During Oktoberfest 2014, staff from the Fiscal and Economic Research Center at the University of Wisconsin – Whitewater randomly interviewed more than 600 attendees. Questions included spending habits during the festival, opinions about events and attendee demographics. The Center also took into account direct spending by La Crosse Festivals, Inc. to conduct the four-day event.

Using an IMPLAN analysis tool, the Center staff determined that the Oktoberfest celebration generates:

- \$15 million in total economic impact,
- more than \$1.17 million in tax payments to various levels of government, and
- 211 jobs in the local community.

The study also determined that on average the typical attendee spends \$202 in the community during Oktoberfest.

The \$15 million figure was reached by combining direct spending by Oktoberfest and attendees, the related spending by businesses affected by the festival and the additional spending by employees of those businesses made possible by the jobs created by activities related to the festival.

(more)

## ***Economic Impact of Oktoberfest – page 2***

A second study was conducted during Oktoberfest 2014 by the DECA Club of West Salem High School. A team of students from the club surveyed more than 400 festival attendees during the Torchlight and Maple Leaf parades. With a focus more on attitudes about Oktoberfest held by those who lined the two parade routes, the club members found:

- 98 percent would recommend attending Oktoberfest to their friends and family
- 90 percent feel Oktoberfest reflects a positive community image of La Crosse
- 82 percent feel Oktoberfest promotes German heritage and culture in the community
- 80 percent feel Oktoberfest is a good value for their entertainment dollar

From a tourism perspective the students found that across just 413 individuals interviewed along the two parade routes, residents of 70 unique zip codes were identified, spanning communities in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and Wisconsin.

A third study conducted in the spring of 2014 by students in the Economics Department at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse found that, among students and residents surveyed, Oktoberfest ranked second – behind only Rotary Lights – as the most valuable community event of its type.

Additional findings by the studies revealed:

- Seventy percent of attendees spend two or more days at Oktoberfest. Two-thirds of attendees go to the parades as well events on one of the two festival grounds.
- Two-thirds of Oktoberfest attendees come in groups of two or more; 30 percent in groups of five or more.
- Nearly 20 percent of Oktoberfest attendees have been coming more than 20 years; one-third have been coming more than 10 years and 96 percent have been to Oktoberfest at least once previously.



# Economic Impact & Community Attitudes



## Total Annual Economic Impact **\$15 Million**

### **\$1.17 Million**

Tax Payments to State & Local Governments

### **211**

Jobs Created (full time equivalent)

### What Oktoberfest patrons are saying...



## 98%

would recommend Oktoberfest to friends and family members



## 90%

feel Oktoberfest reflects a positive community image of La Crosse



## 82%

feel Oktoberfest promotes German heritage & culture in La Crosse



## 80%

feel Oktoberfest is a good value for their entertainment dollar



## 70

Zip Codes represented among just 413 persons surveyed at the parades



## \$202

Average spending by patrons while attending Oktoberfest



## 20 for 20

20 percent of patrons have attended 20 years or more



## #2 in LaX

Residents: Oktoberfest is second most valuable community event (after Rotary Lights)



Economic Impact based on data from the 2014 Oktoberfest celebration (Sept. 25 to 28) collected and analyzed by the Fiscal and Economic Research Center, Department of Economics, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. Attitude, tourism and attendance data collected during the 2014 Oktoberfest celebration by the DECA Club of West Salem High School. Value study data collected during a 2014 survey of La Crosse residents and college students by the Department of Economics, University of Wisconsin-La Crosse.