

Fairfax County Home to 100 Festivals



Patrons visiting the Northern Virginia Fine Arts Festival, which is produced by the Greater Reston Arts Center (GRACE).
Image Credits: Greater Reston Arts Center

Fairfax County, VA – With a population of more than one million residents, it has long been known that Fairfax County, Virginia is the most populous jurisdiction in the National Capital Region. However, what may surprise both residents and visitors is that the County is also home to nearly 100 annual outdoor festivals, most of which have very strong arts and cultural components.

Not only do festivals contribute to the quality of life for Fairfax County residents, but they act as a major draw for visitors from both the region and nation. **“Tourism in Fairfax County is a \$2.9 billion industry,”** says Barry Biggar, President and CEO of Visit Fairfax. **“Our visitors have numerous opportunities to attend many arts and cultural events, including festivals, and they significantly contribute to Fairfax County’s overall tourism experience,”** according to Mr. Biggar. When communities attract cultural tourists, local businesses reap the rewards. A study done by Americans for the Arts found that nearly half of arts and cultural event attendees live outside of the destination, and their event-related spending is more than twice that of local residents.

“People come to festivals for one thing, maybe the arts and crafts, are then introduced to forms of art they never would have experienced otherwise, and often are inspired to seek out new arts experiences in the future,” said Carole Rosenstein, Associate Professor of Arts Management at George Mason University, who worked on the 2010 National Endowment for the Arts study - *Live from Your Neighborhood: A National Study of Outdoor Arts Festivals*.

Fairfax County’s diverse offering of festivals showcases everything from the arts, to culinary, to seasonal festivities, to film, and theatre works, nearly every month of the year on an annual basis. Holly Koons McCullough, Executive Director and Curator at the Greater Reston Arts Center helps run the Northern Virginia Fine Arts Festival which will be held May 16-18. The fine arts festival showcases more than 200 juried artists nationwide and draws 30,000 patrons to Reston. **“The festival provides a personal experience; visitors have the opportunity to view, purchase, and interact directly with the featured artists,”** says McCullough.

Other community-wide festivals bring locals and visitors together to celebrate our ethnic diversity. The annual DMV Punjabi Mela 2014 Festival, which will be held May 25 at Bull Run Regional Park, draws over 10,000 attendees and celebrates Indian & Pakistani heritage and culture.

“Festivals offer diverse and creative venues for experiencing the arts and create opportunities for meaningful exchange of ideas,” says Linda Sullivan, President & CEO of the Arts Council of Fairfax County.

For more information on the arts and cultural festival listings for the entire 2014 calendar year, visit the Arts Council’s website at www.artsfairfax.org/resources/festivals. Fairfax County’s many events and festivals are published on Visit Fairfax’s website at www.fxva.com.

####

Founded in 1964, the Arts Council of Fairfax County, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization designated as Fairfax County's local arts agency. It is the only umbrella organization serving and representing all forms of art in Fairfax County. The Arts Council of Fairfax County is the voice of the arts, dedicated to fostering dynamic and diverse local arts, ensuring that arts thrive by providing vision, leadership, capacity building services, advocacy, funding, education, and information.

The Arts Council is funded in part by Fairfax County, corporations, foundations, individuals, Virginia Commission for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.