

Highlights from... **First Day Festival 2009**



* Designed by Benjamin Ancrum

On Sunday, August 16, 2009, the community came together to celebrate the 7th annual First Day Festival, the largest to date. Close to 10,000 children and their families flocked to Liberty Square at the SC Aquarium and the Charleston Maritime Center to welcome the beginning of the new school year. In addition to the continuing festival elements, there were three focus areas for the 2009 festival: reducing waste and going green, encouraging healthy lifestyles and wellness, and increasing business involvement in education.

Through the generous support and in-kind contributions of over ninety businesses on the Honor Roll list, the 2009 First Day Festival was a tremendous success. Employers were asked to commit to support education by allowing employees time off to participate in activities at their child's school. The Honor Roll Partners were businesses and organizations that encouraged employees to attend the First Day Festival, supported employees taking their children to school by giving them time off, and committed to support education throughout the year by allowing employees time to participate or volunteer at their child's school. In addition to making a commitment to support education, many Honor Roll Partners made in-kind or monetary contributions to the First Day Festival.



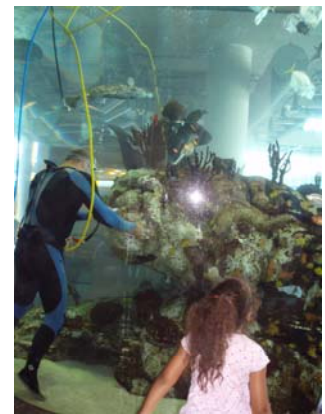
The First Day Festival Initiative is a campaign to generate widespread community support for schools, excitement about the beginning of a new school year, and a celebration of education. The main purposes of the initiative are to encourage parents to attend school with their children on the first day, urge businesses to support parents by giving them time off to get involved in their child's education, and

enhance public engagement in our schools. Mayor Riley became an enthusiastic supporter of the First Day of School Initiative after learning about it from former Mayor of Nashville, Bill Purcell,

who implemented it in his city. The first festival was held in Charleston in August 2003 at the Joe Riley Stadium, with an estimated 3,000 students and parents attending. In the first year of the festival, 32 community-based agencies and 18 school-based programs provided information to festival attendees.

After the first year, the festival was moved to Liberty Square at the SC Aquarium. At Liberty Square, the festival was able to offer more features and water activities which allowed for the continued growth of the First Day Festival. The new location also provided opportunities for kids to experience things they might otherwise not be able to experience like touring the SC Aquarium, fishing activities and boat rides in Charleston's Harbor.

The many students and families that attended the 7th Annual First Day Festival received information on student support services and programs from more than 80 exhibitors. Additionally, 5,536 festival attendees toured the SC Aquarium this year. Spirit Line Cruises and Charleston Harbor Tours provided 970 boat rides for children and families around the harbor. New to the festival, the Health and Wellness Center was comprised of 12 medical, dental, and physical health exhibitors that provided educational information, demonstrations or screening for children and their families.



In the Kids Zone, students participated in recreational games, jump castles, volleyball, tennis, hula hoops, and much more. Emcee Steve Sloan of Imagine Entertainment provided music and entertainment throughout the day on the stage at Liberty Square. Ken Bellamy of Full Code Recordings was the DJ at the Charleston Maritime Center.

One important part of the 7th annual First Day Festival was the school supplies that were handed out to thousands of children. The goal of having a School Supply Center at the



festival is to ensure that students start school with the supplies they need to participate fully in the learning process. This year 21 organizations and businesses participated in collecting school supplies or backpacks. Staples donated 6,000 totes and a variety of school supplies. Backpacks with school supplies were donated by the East Cooper Breakfast Rotary. The Lowcountry Ballers, a local youth basketball league, spent the Saturday before the festival filling school totes with donated school supplies. The Boys and Girls Club of the Trident Area decorated drop-off boxes and distributed them to organizations and businesses throughout the area for collections.

The Charleston Maritime Center was the location of the Food Court, display vehicles, and entertainment. Parents were able to sign their children up for the Free and Reduced Lunch program with the help of CCSD Food Service employees. Three local sports teams, Charleston Riverdogs, SC Stingrays, and the Charleston Battery, provided games and activities for the students to play.



Students and their families also learned about preparing and eating healthier foods and participating in healthier activities at the Food Court. The Charleston County School District's Food Services planned, coordinated and ran the Food Court where 16 vendors provided samples of healthy foods being offered in the schools. Local chefs from four area restaurants conducted cooking demonstrations during which the students could watch and even participate in preparing healthy meals.

In an effort to give back to the community, food items were collected at the First Day Festival and donated to the Lowcountry Food Bank. Through the Food Drive, 412 pounds of food were collected, which is enough for 322 meals that will help to feed the hungry in the lowcountry.

Reducing waste and becoming more environmentally friendly was among the focus areas for 2009. Guidelines for partners, exhibitors and volunteers were established and the Charleston Green Committee was on-site the day of the festival educating the students and parents about reducing waste and recycling. Throughout the day, 1,500 pounds of cardboard and 1,260 pounds of bottles and cans were recycled. Charleston Water Systems provided four water buffalos to help reduce the

amount of plastic bottle waste. By the end of the day, approximately 1,300 gallons of water was distributed and consumed, nearly emptying three of the 500 gallon water buffalos. ALSCO, Inc. provided linens for all of the tables in order to eliminate the use of plastic table cloths.

This year, 253 volunteers gave their time to assist with the First Day Festival, amounting to almost 1,200 hours of service. Over 20 organizations and businesses were represented amongst the volunteers. Volunteers spent the day assisting with set-up, parking, boat rides, the Kids Zone, the Food Court, and much more. The hard work of the volunteers and the extraordinary support from the community helped to make the festival a wonderful day and a great kick off for the new school year. The 7th Annual First Day Festival was a tremendous success because of the many partners who invested their time and resources to support our students and their education at the beginning of a new school year!



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