

MEDIA CONTACT

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2014 Bradenton Blues Festival

"A Resounding Success—The Best Ever"

The event, which took place on Saturday, December 6, at downtown Bradenton's Riverwalk, attracted an audience of more than 3,200 people and 3,250 live-stream viewers from around the region and the world.

(Bradenton, Florida) The third annual Bradenton Blues Festival, held on December 6, at downtown Bradenton's Riverwalk, was "a resounding success, surpassing all records," says Johnette Isham, executive director of Realize Bradenton, the organization that produces the festival, along with the support of multiple community partners and sponsors.

Isham says the all-day event attracted more than 3,200 people from around the region and country. "Thanks to dozens of forward-thinking community leaders, organizations and businesses, the Bradenton Blues Festival has quickly grown into one of our region's top-flight cultural events with a draw that extends far beyond this part of Florida." She notes that 87 percent of the Florida attendees came from outside of Manatee County. "Our statistics show that people came from 30 states, including Alaska, and three foreign countries (Canada, Germany and the United Kingdom)," says Isham. She adds that people hailed from 225 different zip codes from within the state of Florida alone.

Isham explains that events like this festival are a major way Realize Bradenton promotes the Bradenton area throughout the country. During the year, the organization presents 75 free events. "We only charge admission for one of them—the Bradenton Blues Festival. Proceeds from the festival make all of the free events possible." She adds that the festival epitomizes the mission of Realize Bradenton--to bring people together to "create a more vibrant, attractive, and prosperous Bradenton area for residents, visitors, and business."

New this year was a food court with southern-inspired cuisine from seven Bradenton-area restaurants and craft beer produced specifically for the festival by Darwin Brewing Co. "The quality of food and drink offerings really raised the bar this year," says Isham. "Gourmet cuisine, craft beverages, and an array of vendors complemented the live music creating a comfortable, family-friendly experience at the award-winning Bradenton Riverwalk."

In the days before the festival, Bradenton buzzed with blues concerts, outdoor festivities and educational outreach programs. The Blues in the Schools program at Manatee High School, sponsored by the R. M. Beall Foundation, benefited more than 300 music students. A free evening community concert on Friday, sponsored by Mojoe Productions, attracted 1,500 people. And, new this year through a partnership with the Manatee County library system and the Suncoast Blues Society, five educational programs were held in branch libraries the week before the main event. The Old Main Street Merchants held Blues on Main with local blues talent on Friday and Saturday evenings and Tarpon Pointe Grill & Tiki Bar hosted the after-party. For the third year, Realize Bradenton

coordinated one of the festival headliners with the Women's Resource Center of Manatee County at the center's Friday evening's Deja Blues event attracting the largest crowd ever of 450 people.

Isham adds that live streaming of the festival, a cooperative effort of Realize Bradenton, Blues Music Magazine and METV, had 3,250 views from all 50 states and 37 foreign countries, including music lovers from Canada, UK, Australia, Germany, France, Hungary, Finland, Brazil, Spain, Greece, Ireland, Thailand, Romania, South Africa, China, Japan, Italy, Belize, Belgium, and Mexico, and many more.

Isham acknowledges that the Bradenton Blues Festival engages some of the nation's most popular, award-winning blues artists with a massive community-wide effort.

"It truly takes a community to create this festival," she says. "We're grateful to our presenting sponsor, BMO Harris Bank, and the other 62 business sponsors who made the third annual Bradenton Blues Festival possible. The festival also relies on the efforts of 150 volunteers, the cooperation of the City of Bradenton, support from the Downtown Development Authority, and the Realize Bradenton staff and board."

Dave Maraman, regional president at BMO Harris Bank, says he's both a fan of the blues and a strong supporter of regional growth. "We're honored to support Realize Bradenton and its mission to transform downtown Bradenton into a vibrant riverfront destination," he says. "It's part of our mission at BMO Harris Bank to encourage and support cultural efforts and initiatives. The Bradenton

Blues Festival not only enhances the lives of those of us who live and work here—but it also unites area-based businesses to form common cause with one of the area's most important economic multipliers—the regional arts and cultural industry."

The 2014 Bradenton Blues Festival's all-star lineup included veteran singer and songwriter Marcia Ball, the double-edged guitar dynamics of Jimmy Thackery and the Drivers, the rollicking Lil' Ed & the Blue Imperials, multiple Grammy nominee Billy Branch & The Sons of Blues, young whirlwind Samantha Fish, "Georgia Songbird" EG Kight, Bradenton-based stars Doug Deming and the Jewel Tones with harmonica virtuoso Dennis Gruenling; and refined finger-style blues guitarist Dave Muskett, who entertained audiences between the major acts. Proceeds from the festival will support Realize Bradenton's free youth, art, and music outreach programs.

Mark your calendars! The 2015 festival will be December 5, 2014, with the headliners announced in early February 2015.

About Realize Bradenton

Realize Bradenton is a non-profit organization that brings people together to create a vibrant and prosperous Bradenton area. For more information, visit: www.RealizeBradenton.com.