

St. Mary of Sorrows Knights of Columbus Council 8600
Celebrate Fairfax! Festival
Program Overview

Celebrate Fairfax! Festival is a county fair and music festival hybrid, steeped in the history and vitality of Fairfax County and its 1.1 million citizens. Launched as the Fairfax Fair in 1982, the event was created by a blue ribbon commission consisting of elected officials and community leaders who realized that the fast-growing county lacked a unifying event or an established downtown. The resulting county fair was (and remains) the only major event designed to reach all of Fairfax's communities.

Prior to its founding, other Fairfax County fairs existed dating back to the 1700's, but by the 1950's, all had disappeared. When the current Fairfax Fair was created in the 1980's, it featured a chili cook-off, carnival, and commercial and county government exhibits, and was held at George Mason University. By the early-1990's, it became apparent that George Mason's growth mirrored that of the Fairfax Fair, and that the needed space was not easily provided. The County leadership worked with local officials and settled on its current home, the then brand new Fairfax County Government Center.

Including 25 acres of property, the 3-day Fair expanded its county government exhibits and created programs that fit the increasingly tech-driven Fairfax region. Among the major programs created during this time was the SciTech Center, a STEM-focused 10,000 square foot pavilion of interactive science-based activities. Also during this period, national headliner entertainment was added, including many of the top country and classic rock artists of that time, such as Toby Keith, Charlie Daniels, Trace Adkins, Three Dog Night, The Band, and Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons. Improvements and enhancements have occurred annually to this popular event.

Since at least as far back as 2005, the Knights annually provide volunteers who sell beer and wine to authorized patrons in a major Council fundraising program which encompasses all three days of festival operations. We typically have sold more product (beer and wine) than any of the other 5 volunteer activities, and our goal is to continue that tradition each year. Our income is derived from receiving two sources: (1) a percentage of the net sales from all beer & wine vendor sites and (2) tips. During the 2017 festival, our Council earned \$5,135 from sales distribution and \$1,642 from tips, for a total of \$6,777.00 which helps us significantly defray our Council's local and state-wide charitable disbursements.

Supporting Celebrate Fairfax! Festival activities typically includes some 40 to 50 Council members and family members who work on shifts beginning on Friday evening and running through Sunday afternoon. Volunteers are provided free passes. Instructions, and strip maps to the event and typically work a 4-hour shift. The Community Activities Chairman (CAC) leads our Council's support to this important program.

The program involves a detailed planning phase and a project execution phase.

Project Planning Phase

- Fairfax County selects the dates for each festival and communicates the information to the public via a dedicated website in the early spring of each year (<http://celebratefairfax.com/info>)
- The County contacts the volunteer agencies in March to gauge interest in supporting the event. Based on feedback, it then conducts a detailed planning meeting a month or so before the event to orient the volunteer groups on the upcoming actions. The CAC attends this meeting to represent the Council.
- Following the planning meeting, the County works with designated POCs to define support requirements in the weeks leading up to the event.
- The CAC discusses the support requirements in early spring at Council meetings and works with the Council webmaster to create a volunteer list.
- The Grand Knight typically sends an e-mail urging support and encouraging volunteers to step up.
- Shift schedules normally are as follows:
 - Friday evening: Two shifts each involving a shift leader and 4-6 volunteers
 - Saturday: Six shifts each involving a shift leader and 5-7 volunteers
 - Sunday: Three shifts, each involving a shift leader and 4-6 volunteers

Project Execution Phase

- The CAC maintains and distributes the volunteer listing and volunteer information in the days leading to kickoff, along with strip maps and access tickets
- The County designates the support location (usually near the Karaoke bandstand) and provides a tent, signage and tables and chairs (at no cost). The CAC brings supplies such as aprons, cloth and paper towels, a stapler, the Council banner, and coolers for soft drinks and bottled water for the volunteers.
- Volunteers will pour and serve a variety of draft beers (from taps on the side of a truck) into plastic cups. All beer costs \$6.00. We will also sell 2 types of wine in special glasses for \$6.00 (same as last year). Wine does not have to be poured into a cup, but the bottle has to be opened and the tin foil covering the beverage removed.
- The designated shift leader handles the money/makes change; to speed things up, the servers should tell the shift leader how much change is needed (keep the guessing to a minimum). Example: patron buys two beers (total of \$12.00) and hands over a \$20.00 bill. The server gives the shift leader the \$20 and says “I need \$8.00 back.”
- One shift leader will be designated to count the money daily, either at the end of the evening or prior to the commencement of support the following day.
- There are capabilities to process sales via a County-provided cell phone.
- Approximately three weeks following the completion of the festival, the County sends the CAC a check to represent the sales distribution percentage. Tips are turned over to the Council financial secretary at the end of each day.