



2024

FESTIVAL FOUNDATION

*Community
Report*

*Growing Traditions,
Preserving the Past*

Growing Traditions... Preserving the Past.



\$158,022.76
DONATED IN TOTAL TO THE COMMUNITY

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A Note From Kat

As we reflect on another remarkable year of events hosted by The Festival Foundation, it is a true privilege to see our community continue to come together to celebrate the rich history and bright future of our beloved Traverse City. From the iconic National Cherry Festival to the exhilarating Iceman Cometh Challenge, the Leapin' Leprechaun 5K, and the unforgettable Cherry T Ball Drop, each event represents a unique thread in the fabric of our vibrant culture. These festivals are more than just celebrations; they are a testament to the strength and spirit of the people who call this region home.

Our commitment to preserving the past while nurturing the future is at the heart of our mission. We recognize that the events we host are deeply tied to the legacy of the "Cherry Capital of the World," and it is important that we continue to honor that history. But equally, we understand the need to evolve and create new opportunities for the next generation. Through programs like the National Cherry Queen Scholarship, internship opportunities, Student Art Competitions and partnerships with NMC Aviation during the Air Show events, we are providing our youth with invaluable experiences that will shape their futures and continue to grow our community's influence on a global stage.

Traverse City has long been known for its charm, beauty, and unparalleled sense of community, and it is this community that makes these events possible. The unwavering support from our volunteers, sponsors, and attendees ensures that our events, not only thrive but also continue to grow year after year. The collaboration and generosity shown by our local businesses, organizations, and individuals inspire us to keep pushing forward, creating new opportunities, and celebrating everything that makes Traverse City so special.

As we move into another year of exciting events, we remain deeply grateful for the passion and support that you, our community, continue to show. Together, we are preserving our past, empowering our future, and ensuring that Traverse City remains the vibrant, welcoming place we all know and love.

Thank you for being a part of our journey. We look forward to celebrating many more years of success with you.

Cherry on to 2025!

Kat Payne,
CEO of The Festival Foundation



Our United Mission

Founded by growers in 1926, our mission is to celebrate and promote cherries, community involvement and the Grand Traverse Region. Preserving your traditions with that cherry on top is the one thing our events have in common. Whether they are the main attraction, the sweet taste of victory at the finish line or the glowing light beginning each new year, supporting our local cherry economy is the heart of what we do.



Our Team

WE EXIST TO SUPPORT YOUR TRADITIONS.

Whether it's preserving a century-old event or dreaming up new ways to celebrate cherries, life and each other, we're here around the clock to ensure these traditions are passed on to future generations. We believe that celebrating together makes us a stronger, happier and healthier community.





Economic Impact Report

NATIONAL CHERRY FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

In 2024, Grand Valley State University conducted an economic impact study on the National Cherry Festival. The study focused on Grand Traverse County and reviewed the number of visitors, their spending patterns and the value associated with that spending.

The 2024 National Cherry Festival is estimated to have generated significant economic benefits for Grand Traverse County in the following ways:

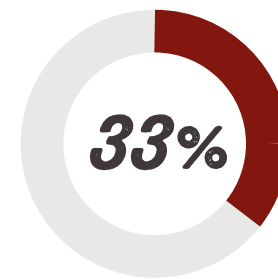
- The total economic impact of the National Cherry Festival was estimated at **\$43.5 million in economic output supporting 330 jobs.**
- Over 73% of festival visitors came from outside Grand Traverse County.
- Visitors generated approximately **\$228,221 in additional tax revenue for the county.**
- Visitors spent an average of **2.5 days attending the National Cherry Festival.**

\$43.5 MILLION

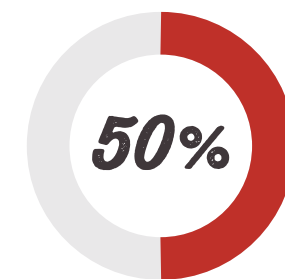
SPENT IN THE AREA BY VISITORS



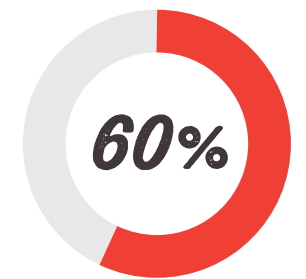
Growing Cherry Awareness



VISITED A FARM OR ORCHARD DURING THEIR STAY IN TRAVERSE CITY



PURCHASED FRESH CHERRY ITEMS DURING THEIR STAY



PURCHASED CHERRY PRODUCTS TO BRING BACK HOME



Growing Our Cherry Family

CHERRY INDUSTRY DAY IS OFFICIAL!

On May 22, 2024, Festival Foundation CEO Kat Paye and National Cherry Queen Carmen Beemer visited Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Senator John Damoose and Representatives Betsy Coffia and John Roth in Lansing. The cherry team handed out cherry pie to every House and Senate member, encouraging lawmakers to attend the festival. Thanks to Senator Damoose's support, Michigan lawmakers officially declared May 22nd as Cherry Industry Day.

Kat Paye expressed hope that the resolution would raise awareness of the cherry industry among lawmakers and encourage consumers to support the festival later this summer.

"We proudly call ourselves the 'Cherry Capital of the World,'" she said. "It's vital that we continue to uphold that title by growing cherries locally."

LOBBYING FOR THE CHERRY AS MICHIGAN'S OFFICIAL STATE FRUIT

The visit to Lansing marked the beginning of efforts to name the cherry Michigan's official state fruit. A bill was introduced by Senator Damoose in September, but it did not receive a vote before the legislative session ended. A new, bipartisan bill is planned to be introduced in early 2025.

"We're not doing this just for fun or because it feels good here where the cherries are grown," said Senator Damoose. "The cherry industry has faced significant challenges for years, with this year being particularly tough. If this bill can draw attention to those struggles and keep the industry's needs in front of both state and federal government, then we'll have accomplished something. I believe this bill will help do that."

Michigan is the leading grower of tart cherries in the world. In 2024, nearly 70% of all tart cherries grown in the United States came from Michigan.



“First ever Cherry Industry Day was without a doubt a cherry success! Thank you to State Senator John Damoose for helping make May 22 Cherry Industry Day! It was an absolutely pleasure to be able to spend the day celebrating Cherry Industry Day while continuing to spread our love of cherries. Hoping the house and senate floors enjoyed their hand delivered slice of Grand Traverse Pie Company cherry pie today!”

- 2023-2024 NATIONAL CHERRY QUEEN CARMEN BEEMER

Our Impressive Volunteer Family

We're proud of the culture we've developed within our volunteer community. They are the soul of the festival. In addition to our volunteers, our staff gives countless hours of time to benefit our community, friends and neighbors in the Grand Traverse area.



VOLUNTEER STATS



- Number of Volunteers: 2,800
- Volunteer Hours: 11,200
- Number of Volunteers for Green Team: 150
- Number of Boosters or Community Share Groups: 35



- Number of Volunteers: 350
- Volunteer Hours: 1,500



- Number of Volunteers: Staffed by The Father Fred Foundation Volunteers & Staff
- Volunteer Hours: 100

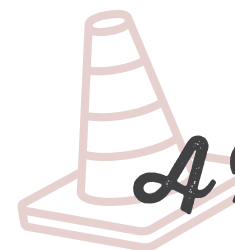


- Number of Volunteers: 81
- Volunteer Hours: 324



"Volunteering for the National Cherry Festival isn't just about helping run the events, it's about bringing our community together to showcase the best festival in the nation."

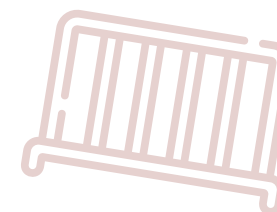
***Jerry & Biz Ruskowski,
Festival Foundation Volunteers***



A Resource to the Community

WE LOANED OUT EQUIPMENT TO SUPPORT THESE NEIGHBORS AND FRIENDS:

- Traverse City Turkey Trot
- Downtown Traverse City Light Parade
- More Than Four Foundation
- Grand Traverse Distillery
- The Grand Traverse Commons
- Q100
- Cedar Polka Fest
- The City of Traverse City
- Toys For Tots
- Up North Pride
- Traverse City Tourism





Giving Back to the Community That Gives to Us



OVER \$158,022.76 DONATED

2024 DONATIONS

- Scholarships – \$24,225.00
- National Cherry Festival Community Share – \$41,366.16
- Iceman Cometh Challenge Community Share – \$27,400.00
- Leapin Leprechaun 5K Donation – \$4,000.00
- Iceman Cometh Challenge Donations – \$18,146.00
- National Cherry Festival Donations – \$12,200.00
- Festival of Race Boosters – \$8,749.00
- CherryT Ball Drop – \$11,000.00
- Festival Foundation Donations – \$6,558.38
- Junior Royalty Donations – \$4,378.22

\$101,476.76

DONATED BY THE NATIONAL CHERRY FESTIVAL

\$158,022.76

DONATED IN TOTAL TO THE COMMUNITY BY THE FESTIVAL FOUNDATION



Supporting Growth & Education

THESE SCHOLARSHIPS WERE AWARDED TO COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN 2024:

AVIATION SCHOLARSHIPS

- Kevin Copeland Scholarship
- A&P Training Scholarship
- EAA Academy Basic Camp
- Ray Scholarship

ROYALTY SCHOLARSHIPS

- National Cherry Queen
- 1st Runner Up
- 2nd Runner Up

ART SCHOLARSHIPS

- Print Program 1st Place
- Print Program 2nd Place
- Print Program 3rd Place

INTERN SCHOLARSHIP

- Ali Ward Memorial Scholarship



Continuing Your Trail Biking Traditions

& GETTING YOUTH INTO THE SPORT!

Our Iceman riders are amazingly generous! They directly donated **\$6,265.95 to cover registrations for the Sno-Cone**. This half pint version of the Iceman is the entry for many into their first taste of trail riding. **They also donated \$17,580.22 to ensure Iceman continues for many years to come!**

The Festival Foundation contributed a large sum in addition to the riders' donations to the biking community. **\$5,000 went to Northern Michigan Mountain Biking Association (NMMBA)**, an organization dedicated to building, maintaining and protecting trails. Just like the Festival Foundation, they take pride in building a community of active families that value bikes, the outdoors, and camaraderie. **We want to support our fellow bikers for many years to come by both improving trails and also encouraging more youngsters into riding.**

2024 DONATIONS

- League of Michigan Bicyclists – \$6,000.00
- NMMBA – \$5,000.00
- Norte – \$4,252.00
- Michigan Scholastic Cycling Association – \$1,500.00
- Dirt Dawgs – \$1,417.50

1,849 REGISTRATIONS DONATED BY RIDERS FOR THE SNO-CONE (SINCE 2021)

\$41,991.67 DONATED TO OUR BIKING COMMUNITY.





Continuing Your St. Paddy's Running Traditions



A HEALTHY WAY TO CELEBRATE!

- Runners enjoyed a scenic route starting and ending on Lake Avenue, taking them over the Boardman River and through charming residential neighborhoods, with a brief stretch on the TART Trail.
- **Proceeds were donated in the amount of \$4,000 to Munson Family Birth and Children's Center**
- We hope to continue this healthy kick-off to St. Patrick's Day for many years to come and carry on our tradition of donating proceeds to support children's health.

\$4,000.00

DONATED TO MUNSON FAMILY BIRTH AND CHILDREN'S CENTER

\$29,000.00

DONATED TO MUNSON SINCE WE STARTED GIVING TO THEM





Continuing Your New Year's Eve Traditions



WITH A CHERRY ON TOP!

· Each year, our town gathers on Front Street to ring in the new year in true Cherry Capital style, as a giant glowing cherry descends onto the city in a spectacular display for thousands of New Year's Eve revelers.

· Funds raised at the event are donated to fight food insecurity in our region. At our 2023-24 celebration we raised over **\$11,000.00** for The Father Fred Foundation.

\$138,000+

DONATED TO FOOD INSECURITY OVER THE LAST 15 YEARS

\$11,000.00+

DONATED TO THE FATHER FRED FOUNDATION IN 2023-24



MADE POSSIBLE BY OUR CHERRY FAMILY!

The CherryT Ball Drop is fully funded by The Festival Foundation and sponsors. All proceeds go directly to charity.

In addition to this, the event is entirely organized and put on by our staff and volunteers. We're sincerely grateful to our friends at Team Elmer's for helping us pull off this iconic event year after year! Their team's expert skills and precision in running the crane keep the CherryT Ball safely in place and shining bright as we ring in each new year. Your dedication and expertise truly make all the difference, and we are deeply grateful for your unwavering support!





National Cherry Festival Website Stats %



WEBSITE FACTS & FIGURES

- Number of users: 501K
- Page views: 1.756 Million
- Mobile vs Desktop vs Tablet: 77% / 22% / 1%
- Average time on site: 1 minute and 37 seconds per page

Top Five Countries

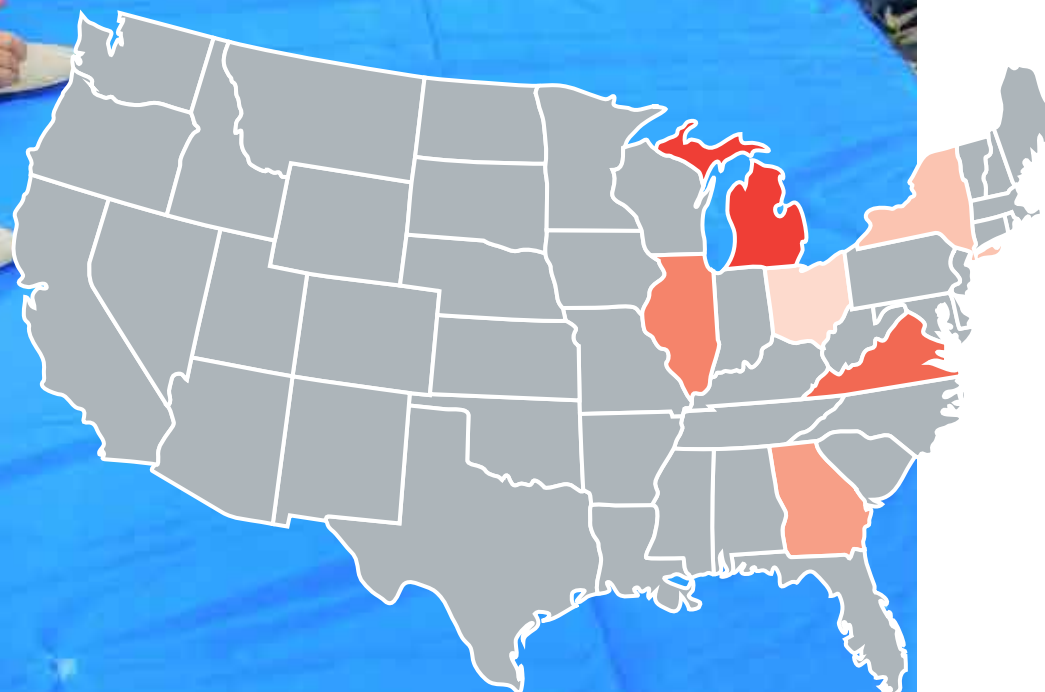
US | CANADA | CHINA
UK | POLAND

Top States

MICHIGAN
VIRGINIA
ILLINOIS
GEORGIA
NEW YORK
OHIO

Top Cities

ASHBURN
DETROIT
TRAVERSE CITY
CHICAGO
ATLANTA
GRAND RAPIDS
NEW YORK
COLUMBUS





Iceman Cometh Challenge Website Stats %



WEBSITE FACTS & FIGURES

- Number of users: 77K
- Page views: 295K
- Mobile vs Desktop vs Tablet: 65% / 34% / 1%
- Average time on site: 1 minute and 11 seconds per page

Top Five Countries

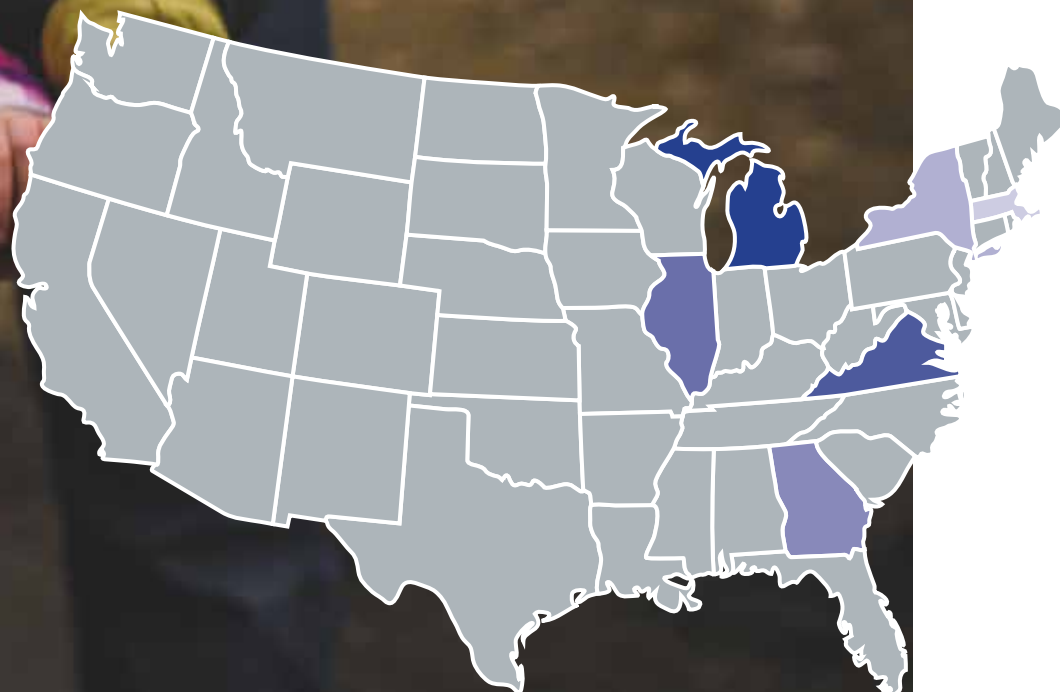
US | CANADA | CHINA
INDIA | GERMANY

Top States

MICHIGAN
VIRGINIA
ILLINOIS
GEORGIA
NEW YORK
MASSACHUSETTS

Top Cities

ASHBURN
DETROIT
CHICAGO
ATLANTA
TRAVERSE CITY
NEW YORK
GRAND RAPIDS
BOSTON



Our Social Community



SOCIAL FOLLOWERS CONTINUE TO GROW YEAR OVER YEAR ACROSS ALL PLATFORMS!

Our top-notch, award-winning social media team takes great pride in serving our community with information that solves any question they may ask!

NATIONAL CHERRY FESTIVAL

- Facebook: 88.7K
- Instagram: 15K

ICEMAN

- Facebook: 13.8K
- Instagram: 7.7K

CHERRY BALL DROP


- Facebook: 6.3K

LL5K

- Facebook: 810



Top Social Posts

 <p>U.S. NAVY BLUE ANGELS ARRIVAL ♥ 484,564 Views</p>	 <p>AIRSHOW ANNOUNCEMENT ♥ 151,273 Views</p>	 <p>U.S. NAVY BLUE ANGELS REMINDER ♥ 143,898 Views</p>
 <p>COUNTDOWN TO NCF ♥ 122,072 Views</p>	 <p>U.S. COASTGUARD & MICHIGAN ARMY NATIONAL GUARD ♥ 115,509 Views</p>	 <p>CIVILIAN PILOTS ♥ 77,396 Views</p>
 <p>PRO PODIUM (MALE) ♥ 39,553 Views</p>	 <p>PRO PODIUM (FEMALE) ♥ 25,142 Views</p>	 <p>RACE RECAP ♥ 17,135 Views</p>

Media Coverage

Our PR team is excited to share the story of Michigan Cherries and the vibrant events of the National Cherry Festival far and wide—locally, nationally and even globally! We're proud to showcase the rich legacy and bright future of Michigan's cherry industry and the exciting celebrations that bring our community together.

TOP MENTION:

- **America the Bountiful with Capri Cafaro (a PBS show)**

TELEVISION:

- WGN Chicago
- Green Bay WFRV Local 5 Live
- Wood TV eightwest
- Fox 17 Morning Mix
- Good Morning Mid Michigan
- WILX Studio 10
- WDIV Local 4

RADIO:

- WGVU with Shelly Irwin
- WJR – All Talk with Kevin Dietz and Tom Jordan
- WRIF with Meltdown
- WTRV The River with Andy Rent
- Michigan Restaurant and Lodging – “The Pineapple Podcast”



National Cherry Festival Media Blitz



- Traveled 1,200+ miles
- Visited 5 cities
- Aired in 7 markets across 3 states
- Did 13 interviews



- Delivered 150 slices of pie to the Michigan House and Senate Offices
- Delivered 20+ full pies
- Gave out hundreds of cherry items



- Passed two 'Cherry Industry Day' resolutions
- Met with Governor Gretchen Whitmer

WE GAINED EXPOSURE TO MILLIONS OF PEOPLE TO SPREAD 'CHERRY LOVE'!

Awards

FROM IFEA (INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL & EVENTS ASSOCIATION)

Our team puts their hearts and souls into the work we do and it shows! The recognition we receive underscores the exceptional effort, quality and innovation that go into each of our events.

GOLD

- Best Overall Merchandising Program (Budget Under 1 Million) – The Festival Foundation and Iceman Cometh Challenge

SILVER

- Best Single Social Video

BRONZE

- Best Event Website
- Best Volunteer Program
- Best Event/Program Within an Event to Benefit a Cause
- Best Emergency Preparedness & Risk Management Plan





Join the Growers Program... Continue Your Traditions



We take great pride in preserving the traditions that matter to you. That's why we created The Festival Foundation Grower's Program—to make giving back a part of the tradition. **“Whether it's \$5 or \$500 a month, this program is designed for everyone. It gives you the flexibility to contribute at a level that feels right for you,”** said Kat Paye, CEO of The Festival Foundation. We deeply appreciate and recognize all donations, with contributions adding up toward different donor levels within the Founder's Circle.

Donors can also choose where their support goes—whether it's the General Fund, the President's Fund or the Scholarship Fund - allowing you to make a meaningful impact in areas that matter most.



**SCAN TO DONATE
AND JOIN OUR
GROWERS!**

***“The Festival Foundation
is proud to help create
lasting memories through
our family of community
events in northern Michigan.
The Growers Program is
your way to help preserve
those traditions by fostering
local agriculture, economic
growth, and sustainability.”***

*Max Anderson,
Festival Foundation Board President*



Continue Your Traditions!

WWW.THEFESTIVALFOUNDATION.ORG