



Highlights from the 2014 First Day Festival



After weeks of rain, the 12th Annual First Day Festival welcomed the sunshine along with over 10,000 children and families to Liberty Square at the SC Aquarium and the Charleston Maritime Center. This year, the Festival was held on Sunday, August 17th on the exact day before school began. Energy was high as families lined up for school supplies, boat ride tickets, and entry into the SC Aquarium. But

the fun didn't stop there! With 63 health and educational exhibitors, children and their parents were able to learn about the many resources available to them throughout the school year.

With the help of 40 generous businesses, organizations, and individuals, the First Day Festival was able to collect enough school supplies to fill 4,000 bags. Because of their hard work and contributions, thousands of children in the community went to school ready to learn. Holding a school supply drive was not the only way local businesses and organizations showed their support. Many also gave monetary donations, registered teams to volunteer, and offered time off for their employees to be more involved in their child's education. Because of their support, our list of 2014 Honor Roll Partners grew to a total of 83 members. These partners allow the First Day Festival to be successful year after year and we are extremely grateful to have such wonderful community partners.





An astounding 6,136 children and families toured the SC Aquarium during the hours of the Festival with no cost to them. Additionally, SpiritLine Cruises and Charleston Harbor Tours provided 4 boat tours and 965 free tickets to Festival goers throughout the event. If the School Supply Drive, exhibitor activities, SC Aquarium, and boat tours weren't enough, the Festival was proud to host three amazing performances by Japan Karate Institute, Flip! Gym, and LowCo Suzuki Guitar. While watching these talented groups perform, families were able to snap pictures with Cool Ray of the SC Stingrays and Scrappy of Patriots Point or play games in our Kids Zone.

The tremendous community support makes the First Day Festival possible and nothing demonstrates this more than the energetic volunteers that worked before and during the event. This year, 200 volunteers gave their time to work the Festival. Whether it was setting up the exhibitor booths, cleaning the grounds, or directing traffic, every volunteer gave their best to ensure that the Festival ran smoothly. There were also 50 volunteers who participated in our Pre-Festival Volunteer Opportunities. These took place days before the celebration and included sorting and packing school supplies in preparation for Sunday.

Going green and reducing waste was a very important part of the 2014 Festival. In order to reduce paper and curb plastic and cardboard waste, guidelines for exhibitors and volunteers were established. Recycling and waste stations were set up on-site the day of the Festival.

Volunteers helped educate exhibitors and attendees about what items could be recycled or composted in addition to picking up litter around Liberty Square and the Maritime Center. Charleston Water System provided three water buffalos and the water wagon for cold drinking water, which helped reduce the amount of plastic bottle waste. With 1,740 cars parked at the SC Aquarium and Gaillard Garages throughout the day, it's no surprise that Charleston Water Systems gave out 1,800 gallons worth of water to attendees, exhibitors, and volunteers.





The Charleston Maritime Center was the venue for Healthy Foods 4 U. Attendees enjoyed learning about making and eating healthy meals and snacks. Many of the vendors, including US Foods and Carolina Produce demonstrated how to prepare fast, easy, and healthy snacks. Attendees were also able to cool off by making their own nutritious snow cones at the Kona Ice food truck.

Thanks to the tremendous support of the community, the 12th annual First Day Festival was a huge success! This city-sponsored event is only possible because of the strong partnerships and support of many city departments, as well as community partners. Special thanks to all who contributed school supplies, and to everyone who played a role in making this one of the best First Day Festival's ever! We hope to see you again next year!



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