

DEL FEST

Bluegrass Music Festival

The Allegany County, Maryland Fairgrounds provides a beautiful backdrop for the DelFest Bluegrass Music Festival.



The loud cheer for Del McCoury has echoed across the Potomac River Valley every Memorial Day weekend since 2008. The cause for celebration is Del's

appearance at DelFest, a premier Allegany County event that attracts a diverse selection of traditional musical talent and thousands of visitors. Del's annual event brings world class musicians to the Allegany County Fairgrounds for four days, while also providing ongoing support to nonprofit agencies throughout the year.

Del McCoury is a bluegrass musician, founder of the Del McCoury Band, and the star of the four-day festival. It would be difficult to underestimate Del's influence on contemporary bluegrass musicians who credit him with inspiration. Accolades have accumulated in recent years, including a lifetime achievement award from the National Endowment for the Arts, membership in the Grand Old Opry, and Grammy nominations. While the honors continue to accrue, Del's energy and professionalism remains constant and endears him to long time fans and members of the younger generation, affectionately referred to as "Delheads."

Recognizing and appreciating his fans' support, Del decided to host a family oriented festival that would provide a first class musical venue for artists and supporters. The decision to hold the event near Cumberland occurred when Del visited the Allegany County Fairgrounds and experienced the ambiance of the Potomac River Valley and nearby mountains, a view reminiscent of the spectacular background appreciated by fans at the famous Telluride Bluegrass Festival held in Colorado.

The number of award winning musicians appearing at DelFest has made it a nationally recognized event that continues to grow annually. In 2014, the population of Allegany County temporarily increased nearly ten percent for the Memorial Day weekend, as more than seven thousand fans made their way to Allegany County from all regions of the United States.

One unique feature of DelFest is the Academy which is held a week prior to the festival. Local musicians and music lovers benefit from hands-on lessons provided by world class bluegrass musicians, including members of Del's family and band. Jam sessions at camp sites and additional entertainment at an indoor venue make DelFest an around-the-clock celebration of traditional music.

Del Yeah!!!

Good Music, Good Times for All

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The Del McCoury band on stage at the Allegheny County Fairgrounds during 2014 DelFest.

McCoury family to give back to the community where their festival was being held.”

Organization of the new group initially benefitted from a **Leadership Allegheny** service committee associated with the Greater Allegheny County Chamber of Commerce. “The service committee was already working on fund-

Entertainment is not the only benefit derived from DelFest; a volunteer organization referred to as the DelFest Foundation provides monetary contributions to nonprofit groups that work for the benefit of area residents. The purpose of the Foundation is to: nurture a strong community, raise awareness of social justice issues, and support a healthy environment. The Foundation has taken an active role in affecting positive, lasting change in the community since its inception in 2009.

According to Doug Schwab, president of the DelFest Foundation, the nonprofit group was “created as a vehicle for the

raising projects that would have a positive effect on our community. When the DelFest Foundation was formed, it was suggested the Leadership Committee become the DelFest Foundation Service Committee. The group evolved to include four local representatives, Del and his sons, and a representative of High Sierra, the promoting organization that operates the DelFest,” stated Mr. Schwab. The other three board members are Barb Buehl, Susan Stewart and Wade Clark.

Local nonprofit groups are welcome to apply for grants on the Foundation website. Following DelFest, the Foundation



Left to right: Jean and Del McCoury, and Susan Stewart (board member DelFest Foundation), present a check to Diana Loar, Executive Director of the Western Maryland Food Bank. Approximately \$50,000 was presented to local nonprofits during a recent reception at the Ramada Inn in Cumberland, MD.

reviews the grant applications and determines how to assist as many Allegany County nonprofits as possible. Once the Foundation makes final decisions, the McCoury family visits Cumberland and distributes checks to the various agencies. The family also meets local agency personnel and learns through first hand experiences how the Foundation supports residents.

Fundraising activities associated with the Foundation include the Cold Weather Shelter Drive, Hooley Pub Crawl T-shirt sales, the DelFest Beverage Volunteer Management effort at DelFest, Foundation Raffles and Del's Dine Out for Hunger.

Since 2009 when \$12,500 was collected, the amount of money granted to local nonprofit agencies has increased dramatically. In 2013, \$42,000 was donated to 11 nonprofit agencies and it is expected the 2014 funds will total approximately \$50,000, thereby bringing the six year total to more than \$200,000. One hundred percent of the Foundation money stays in Allegany County.

In addition to the Delfest Foundation grants, the McCoury family partners with local volunteers to supply the Western Maryland Food Bank with canned goods. More than 2000 pounds have been donated by Del's Army Food Drive since its inception.

According to Doug Schwab, "DelFest is an excellent example of people from outside the area partnering with local residents to create a first class music festival and the biggest event at the Allegany County Fairgrounds. We are fortunate to have the McCoury family as partners and value their friendship and support."

The DelFest Bluegrass festival will be returning to the Allegany County Fairgrounds in Cumberland, Maryland on Memorial Day weekend, May 21st through May 24, 2015. The festival runs for 4 days/nights with late night shows, on-site camping, kids' area and activities, artist playshops, a bluegrass band competition, food and drink, and arts and crafts.

See DelFestfoundation.org and DelFest.com for more information and volunteer opportunities.