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Craft Brew Fest set to draw hundreds of out-of-state attendees to Skowhegan over Labor Day Weekend

SKOWHEGAN—On Saturday, Aug. 31, the Skowhegan Craft Brew Festival is expected to draw more than 1,000 visitors to Skowhegan. Currently twenty percent of ticketholders hail from out of state.

In its fourth year, the festival attracts people from all over New England and around the country. More than 700 tickets have been sold to date, with more than 140 tickets purchased by people in Arizona, California, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, South Carolina, Texas, and all five other New England states. Massachusetts currently holds the second-highest ticket count by state after Maine, with 43 tickets sold. VIP tickets sold out in June, and this year General Admission tickets will be capped to ensure the festival retains the small-town vibe attendees love.

"It has been really amazing to watch the excitement for this event grow each year—among both locals and visitors from afar," said Kristina Cannon, executive director of festival coordinating organization Main Street Skowhegan. "This event is doing what it is intended to do—bring people to Skowhegan and enhance our town's reputation as a local food and brew hub. It's thrilling to know that 20 percent of the people in our downtown this weekend will be from out of state!"

In 2016, Cannon and her board of directors decided to take the plunge and plan Skowhegan's first craft brew festival, hoping that it would positively impact the town's economy and put Skowhegan on the map as a destination for local beer and food. Since then, the festival has grown steadily, drawing more people to town each year.

Cannon believes the brew festival is playing a role in Skowhegan's revitalization. "Skowhegan is notoriously a drive-thru town. At the brew fest, they become a captive audience. Once they spend a few hours in our historic downtown, many attendees want to come back," said Cannon. "Our local merchants have sold products to attendees during, but more often they see an impact after the festival—people who saw their shop while attending brew fest and came back specifically to purchase something."

On Saturday, brew fest attendees will celebrate Maine's craft beverage industry with the opportunity to sample more than 100 different types of beer, wine, cider, kombucha, and spirits from 33 Maine-only craft brew vendors.

New this year, organizers have added corn hole and a second music tent, providing entertainment at both ends of the festival. Acoustic acts—Skowhegan's own Connor Reeves and Portland favorite Adam Miller—will play during VIP hour, and Papa Tim and the Desperate Man's Blues Explosion and the Rob Burnell Band will entertain attendees from 3 to 7 p.m.

The festival will feature an eclectic mix of fare including organic tacos, poutine, barbecue, and more.

All proceeds from this event benefit nonprofit organization Main Street Skowhegan and their ongoing revitalization efforts in Skowhegan.

Event sponsors include Skowhegan Savings Bank, Kennebec Valley Tourism Council, Maine Grains, Butler's Car Wash, Damon's, DuBois Construction, Franklin Printing, Franklin Savings Bank, Hight Family of Dealerships, Short Circuit Electric, Redington-Fairview General Hospital, Animal Medical Clinic, Are You Ready to Party??, Kyes-Carpenter Insurance, The Towne Motel, Whittemore's Real Estate, The Maine Meal, The Miller's Table, Crooked Face Creamery, and The Bankery and Skowhegan Fleuriste.

With fewer than 350 general admission tickets left, the festival is expected to sell out. Organizers are encouraging people to get their tickets as soon as possible. Tickets can be purchased at skowheganraftbrewfest.com.