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## **A Dozen Years and Counting: Foothills Fall Festival Continues Sparking Energy for Downtown Maryville and Blount County, Tenn. *City of Maryville Receives 2011 Blount Partnership Tourism Award at Sept. 15 Ceremony***

**Maryville, Tenn.** – For small towns across the country facing a persistent down economy, municipal leaders often feel hard-pressed to develop cost-effective, long-term strategies to support hard-hit downtown areas while also providing a quality-of-life boost to local residents.

The City of Maryville, Tenn., has realized award-winning success on both counts, through its long-running Foothills Fall Festival, slated to take place for the twelfth year on Oct. 7-9, 2011.

The City of Maryville just received on Sept. 15, 2011, the Blount Partnership 2011 Tourism Award for its performance impacting local tourism and economic development, centered in Maryville's Downtown.

Also the recipient of many national-level awards, the Foothills Fall Festival drives some 70,000 local, regional and national visitors each fall to Downtown Maryville for national-caliber entertainment as well as family and children's activities, food, and diverse arts and crafts.

"We are especially proud that our focus for the Foothills Fall Festival has never changed in more than a decade," said City Manager Greg McClain. "That focus is on providing high-quality, affordable family entertainment, all in a setting that drives major visitor traffic to Downtown Maryville and Blount County to help our many local businesses expand their visibility, reach and bottom-line sales."

According to McClain, the Festival is not a big money-maker for the City, nor was it ever intended to be.

"We generally net just enough funds to set us up for a strong start-up to the following year's Festival, and for us, that's all we really need," McClain said. "The value the City receives from this event is not tied to money back to the City, but instead, to the marketing, visibility and reputation-building we generate for our Downtown businesses and for our countywide community."



“Providing a top-quality entertainment experience for all of our community’s families – regardless of their personal financial means – is another value component of this event, and I’m not sure you can put an actual price tag on what that means to our citizens,” McClain said.

Many Downtown Maryville business owners agree with the Festival’s value.

“The Foothills Fall Festival makes being a business in downtown Maryville even more thrilling and exciting when there are events of this caliber and quality,” said Joy Carver, owner of Dandy Lions, a Downtown Maryville gift and stationery boutique.

“With the time of year the Festival occurs, businesses can show a glimpse of holiday merchandise and offerings, which then encourages those same patrons to come back,” Carver said. “The festival increases sales and visibility with the scope of guests and individuals it attracts, which carries on throughout the year.”

According to Mahasti Vafaie, owner of The Tomato Head, “Fall Festival in Maryville is definitely our busiest weekend of the year. We love the fact that so many people are drawn to Downtown Maryville, mingling and meandering from the businesses downtown to the arts and crafts booths, to all of the wonderful musical performances.”

“We certainly attribute some of our growth over the years to the fact that every fall we are provided an opportunity to expose new customers to our restaurant,” she said.

Among a host of featured entertainers to headline the 2011 Foothills Fall Festival will be Reba McEntire, Sara Evans, The Band Perry and Chicago, with a full range of other musical performances as well. Tickets for the concerts sold out in August 2011.

A juried arts and craft show with free music, activities and demonstrations will fill Broadway in the heart of downtown Maryville. Sixteen acres of adventures for the family will fill the Greenbelt Park near Blount County's award-winning library, all free of charge.

For more event information, visit the Foothills Fall Festival’s website at [www.foothillsfallfestival.com](http://www.foothillsfallfestival.com).

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