

Portland party: Organizers dub block party a success



By Submitted

Cars, music, food and support for local businesses is what Portland's Downtown Block party is all about. Over 1,000 people are partaking in the festivities that was held on Saturday. It is the first annual Downtown Block Party, and members are starting to plan for next years.

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By Jon Szerlag
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PORTLAND, Mich. -

With over 200 classic cars lined down Kent Street from the Portland Cruisers Car Club and well over 1,000 party-goers, Portland's Downtown Block Party exceeded everybody's expectations.

"It was a very big success, especially for the first year," said Portland Main Street Manager and Downtown Development Director Patrick Reagan. "Normally, the expected cycle is to lose money the first year, lose less the second and make money on the third (event)."

The money that was raised will go back into the downtown area, and be used to support next year's block party.

"We made money on the event, but it wasn't about the money; it was about bringing down people to downtown Portland, and you can't put a price tag on that," said Reagan.

During the event there was music, a softball and kickball tournament and local businesses opened their doors and set up booths so residents and new customers could enjoy what they had to offer.

"I love to see people come to Downtown Portland and having fun, and I heard from another shop owner who said she had a lot of people come in who have never been in before," said Distinctive Occasions Owner and Portland's Promotions and Marketing Committee Chairperson Wanda Urie. "That is an important goal, and having people coming in (to the downtown)."

Next year's event is starting to get organized, and is planned to be bigger, better and bring more people to the local businesses.

"The high point in my day was looking at the Chocolate Moose that had a line that went outside the store; they had a tremendous response and that was one of the missions of the Main Street Program (to give local businesses exposure)," said Maria's Tacos Owner James Espinosa. "(The event) far exceed that mission."

Another impressive aspect to the block party was how the local business and group sponsors helped with different aspects of the event.

"It's great to see the enthusiasm, and we are so happy with the sponsors and the different groups," said Reagan. "It was great to have them step up and help out. It shows what a truly great downtown can help accomplish."

Other upcoming events coming to Portland include Thursdays on the Grand music concerts starting June 3, Third Friday Artwalk starting June 18 and the Cruise-A-Thong! (flip flops) marathon "for the average Joe" on June 19.

To learn more about Portland's Main Street program and events, go to www.portlandmainstreet.org.

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