

KITCHENER • WATERLOO
OKTOBERFEST. 

2023 Year in Review



Message from our Board President and Executive Director

Hallo Freund/Freundin!

This past year has been one of change. To begin, we put into motion our newest strategic plan. This saw us engage our staff, volunteers and community members in different ways including the formation of new task forces.

With the pandemic in the rearview mirror (while still feeling its long-reaching effects), we have a thoughtful eye to the future and are gradually bringing back events and adding new initiatives that fit within our brand and strategies.

In May of 2023, we hosted our largest Women of the Year ceremony yet. The event honoured a record-breaking 96 local nominees in 11 categories and over 600 guests attended to celebrate their many achievements.

In June we bade a fond farewell to retiring Executive Director Alfred Lowrick and welcomed his successor, Tracy Van Kalsbeek. We thank Alfred for everything that he has done for our organization and wish him all the best in his retirement. We look forward to supporting Tracy as she leads the organization into our next chapter.

Our Oktoberfest Golf Experience in September was a sold-out success with amazing weather (we know we don't get that very often!) and our golfers thoroughly enjoyed the themed hole activations and fantastic silent auction.

To help grow attendance and take advantage of pedestrian-only areas in downtown Kitchener, in 2023 we moved a large portion of our Willkommen Platz to the Gaukel Block. Not only did the relocation provide a larger space for our new stage and screen, it also allowed us to add more activations and vendors, a larger tent, improved food and beverage stations, a new VIP area and greater back-of-house capacity.

We kicked off the Thanksgiving Day weekend festivities with the inaugural Block Party featuring The Road Hammers. While the weather was damp and chilly, we stayed dry in our heated tent and rocked out to the country vibe. Over the four days, we welcomed to the stage the German band Dorfröcker and many other familiar faces such as Walter Ostanek, The Golden Keys, The Western Swing Authority, The Transylvania Club dancers, Moonshine Band, Almost HIP, Ziggy Zaggies, The Romeros, Kobbler Jay, Weiss Blau, The Schwaben Club dancers, Boo Radley Project and more!

This year we brought back the Loft Haus reception at the Walper Hotel before heading to the Official Keg Tapping. The sun peaked through the clouds as the keg was tapped in front of a full crowd and stayed shining for a bit longer as we welcomed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and toured him around the Willkommen Platz.

Message from our Board President and Executive Director (Continued)

We continued to host the vendor market along King Street and added in the new “Tante Frieda’s Pumpkin Patch” and DOGtoberfest initiatives at Carl Zehr Square. KIDtoberfest was held at THEMUSEUM with fun Bavarian activities and performances for our 1,300+ attendees.

All in all, the Willkommen Platz numbers were up from 24,000 in 2022 to an estimated 30,000 guests in 2023. The Oktoberfest Thanksgiving Day Parade also went extremely well this year with many favourable comments from attendees related to timing, bands and floats.

Overall feedback from our Festhallen partners indicates that 2023 visitor numbers were up for them too – in many cases close to pre-pandemic times. Other third-party events saw increases, as well.

VOLUNTEERS ARE ONE OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT ASSETS! To each volunteer – you have our deepest gratitude for continuing to be the beating heart of our Festival! Congratulations again to our 2023 Volunteers of the Year: Rob Hesch from the Operations Council and Andrea Davidson from both the Mascots and Parade committees. And, given posthumously, Carl Buder, Parade and Hospitality volunteer for almost 25 years.

Looking ahead, we are excited to reimagine the Festival through our strategic priorities of offering visitors a world class experience, building community engagement and securing the long term financial viability of the Festival.

We trust you will be there with us, as we engage others to “Be Bavarian” at K-W Oktoberfest in 2024.

Prost,



Allan Cayenne
Board President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allan Cayenne".



Tracy Van Kalsbeek
Executive Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tracy Van Kalsbeek".

P.S. thank you to our small, but mighty, staffing team of Carol, Laurie, Ana and SarahJane for their hard work and incredible dedication!

2023 Board of Directors



ALLAN CAYENNE
Peak Realty Ltd.

President, 2022-2023



LENA HEROLD
Fairview Senior Community

Vice President



DARRYL FLETCHER
Chef/D

Vice President



TIM BECKETT
The Office of the Fire Marshal

Past President, 2019-2022



ANDREW ROTH
Miller Thompson LLP

Secretary



JESSE DUGARD
BMC Nesbitt Burns

Treasurer



MOHSAN ABDULLAH
Token Creative Services

Director



NICOLE BROWN
Culinary Tourism Alliance

Director



SANDRA DYNKA
Wildcard and Co.

Director



KIRK HANKE
German Club Representative

Director



TIM HATTLE
Hattle Framing Inc.

Director



COLLEEN JAMES
Divonify

Director



KERRY-LYNN WILKIE
Conestoga College

Director



TRACY VAN KALSBECK
K-W Oktoberfest Inc.

Executive Director



ALFRED LOWRICK
K-W Oktoberfest Inc.

Past Executive Director

2023 Operations Council



NICOLE BOSS
Quarry
Marketing



TARYN FINDLAY
High Bar Brands
Parade - Operations



BOB FOSTER
German Heritage



TODD GOTTSCHALK
Willkommen Platz -
Entertainment



TIM HATTLE
Hattle Framing Inc.
Willkommen Platz -
Operations



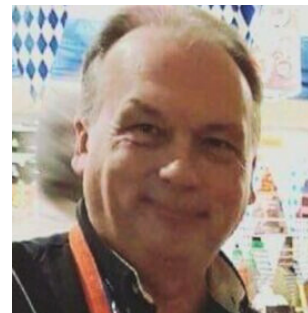
ROB HESCH
Brand Momentum
Business Development



MELISSA MELNYCHUK
Torn Banner Studios
Diversity, Equity
& Inclusion



ALICIA PANETTA
Melloul-Blamey
Construction
Marketing



MARK POTTER
Event Support Teams



ERIC SCHEFFLER
DG Bevan Insurance
Parade - Development



KELLY WILKER
University of Waterloo
Business Development

H-W Oktoberfest Inc. Staff Team



TRACY VAN KALSBECK
Executive Director
tracy@oktoberfest.ca



ANA GOLOBIC
Operations Manager
anag@oktoberfest.ca



CAROL TUCKER
Volunteer & Administration Manager
carolt@oktoberfest.ca



LURIE DAVISON
Business Development Manager
lauried@oktoberfest.ca



SARAHJANE MCNAUGHTON
Marketing & Communications Manager
sarahjanem@oktoberfest.ca



2023 Highlights



2023 Highlights

K-W Oktoberfest in the Community

- 17 EVENTS hosted by K-W Oktoberfest
- 8 APPEARANCES by the WunderWagen
- 8 EVENTS hosted by Community Partners
- 17 FESTHALLEN EVENTS hosted by Festhallen Partners



K-W Oktoberfest Entertains

- 30+ KEG TAPPINGS
- 50+ LIVE BANDS & ENTERTAINERS
- 30K WILLKOMMEN PLATZ Visitors
- 150K THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE Attendees

- 3K KIDTOBERFEST+ CHRISTKINDERFEST Attendees
- 96 WOMEN OF THE YEAR Nominees
- 600 WOMEN OF THE YEAR Attendees
- 144 OKTOBERFEST Golfers

K-W Oktoberfest Connects

- 5.7M+ IMPRESSIONS
- 1.5M+ PEOPLE REACHED
- 80K+ ENGAGEMENTS
- 36K+ FOLLOWERS



- 450K WEBSITE VISITS
- 12K EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS



2023 Featured Events

K-W Oktoberfest Rogers Women of the Year - Thursday, May 25, 2023

The 2023 K-W Oktoberfest Rogers Women of the Year event was an incredible success, marking its third year reaching record-breaking numbers. With an impressive 96 nominees, the sold-out, 600+ attendee event celebrated the outstanding achievements and contributions of women in Waterloo Region. Among them, 11 remarkable recipients were honoured for their exceptional accomplishments and inspiring leadership:

Arts & Culture - Angela Onuora, Community Service - Monica Himmelman, Entrepreneur Under 40 - Rachel Bartholomew, Entrepreneur 40+ - Jolene MacDonald, Group Achievement - Community Support Connections' Exercise Team, Health & Wellness - Marian Best, Professional Under 40 - Amy Cyr, Professional 40+ - Clarice Ward, Science, Technology, Engineering & Math - Dinah Davis, Young Adult (14 to 23) - Rachel Almaw, Lifetime Achievement - Sandra Henein

These extraordinary women were joined by friends, family and local dignitaries at the awards event held at Bingemans on May 25th, with the assistance of our Masters of Ceremonies, Robin & PJ from Mornings on Country 106.7. The event featured guest speakers Dr. Rebecca Sutherns and Ren Navarro and local musician, Danielle Doel.



K-W Oktoberfest Thanksgiving Day Parade - Monday, October 9, 2023

The 2023 K-W Oktoberfest Thanksgiving Day Parade proved to be another resounding success, captivating the hearts of over 150K attendees. A long-standing community tradition for many, the parade showcased exciting new displays and performances and was livestreamed for the first time. Featuring a total of 44 entries, including 29 floats and 9 marching bands, the parade offered a diverse array of entertainment.

The introduction of new floats brought a fresh sense of creativity to the procession – especially the vibrant Ontario Turkey float, aptly named Drumstick through a community contest. Joining us all the way from Germany, Musikverein Elchingen filled the streets with Bavarian musical charm. Our Grand Marshals were Mike Farwell and Paul Fixter, the voices of the Kitchener Rangers. Their dedication to our community and passion for sports has made them beloved figures in Kitchener-Waterloo.



2023 Featured Events (Continued)

The live streaming initiative, in partnership with CTV, expanded the reach of the parade, enabling audiences to enjoy the festivities from the comfort of their own homes. The K-W Oktoberfest Parade Committee's coordination and logistics resulted in smoother transitions between floats and performances. Spectators commented on the momentum of the parade, appreciating the meticulous planning that went into organizing such a grand event.

The Onkel Hans Food Drive, in support of The Food Bank of Waterloo Region, saw us collect nonperishable food items and cash donations at the Oktoberfest Thanksgiving Day Parade on October 9th and at the Stuff a Bus event on October 14th. In total, 9,981 pounds of food and \$6,056.80 in cash was collected, which equates to 19,911 meals.



Christkinderfest - Saturday, December 9, 2023

The inaugural Christkinderfest event, held December 9th at THEMUSEUM in downtown Kitchener, was an immense success, drawing over 1,425 attendees. Inspired by the Christkindl Market and the spirit of Christmas festivals found across Germany, Christkinderfest provided a free, Bavarian-inspired, family-friendly experience for all participants.

The event featured Bavarian-themed activities from traditional wooden ornaments to O Tannenbaum clay trees, German entertainment including accordionists and dance groups as well as a few favourite local entertainers.

Christkinderfest exceeded our expectations and emphasized the community's enthusiasm for free cultural celebrations. Its inaugural success demonstrated that Christkinderfest could become a new community tradition!

In addition, we partnered with Deloitte, offering their staff a VIP experience at Christkinderfest. They received exclusive access to Bavarian-themed activities, food and beverages in a private VIP lounge. Additionally, we added a touch of Oktoberfest to their evening adult staff Christmas party, infusing it with the spirit of Gemütlichkeit. The collaboration made their holiday celebration truly unforgettable!



Oktoberfest Cares

Oktoberfest Cares is a K-W Oktoberfest initiative designed to support Festival events in Waterloo Region. These funds allow us to support charity partners and host events that enrich our community and keep admission costs low or free, including Festival favourites like the Women of the Year celebration and family-friendly events, KIDtoberfest & Christkinderfest!

Fundraising Efforts



OKTOBERFEST GOLF EXPERIENCE

The Oktoberfest Golf Experience is not just the best golf tournament in the Region, it's also a large fundraising event for K-W Oktoberfest. Proceeds from the event were in support of Oktoberfest Cares initiatives.

\$1,500 DONATED TO THE CAMBRIDGE FOOD BANK



GRAND RIVER HOSPITAL FOUNDATION – OKTOBERFEST CARES 50/50 DRAW

The 2023 Grand River Hospital Foundation - Oktoberfest Cares 50/50 draw broke records as the hospital's most successful 50/50 fundraiser two years in a row!

\$10K+ DONATED TO GRAND RIVER HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

\$10K+ RAISED FOR OKTOBERFEST CARES INITIATIVES



WOMEN OF THE YEAR

Proceeds from ticket sales for our K-W Oktoberfest Rogers Women of the Year Awards were donated to an organization that supports the needs of women in our community.

\$4,500 DONATED TO GRAND RIVER HOSPITAL FOUNDATION



17 EVENTS
HOSTED BY
KITCHENER • WATERLOO
OKTOBERFEST


36K+ SOCIAL MEDIA
FOLLOWERS



150K 
THANKSGIVING DAY
PARADE ATTENDEES

2023
in Review

450K 
WEBSITE VISITS

96 
WOMEN OF THE
YEAR NOMINEES

30+ 
KEG TAPPINGS



30K
WILLKOMMEN PLATZ
VISITORS



144
OKTOBERFEST
GOLFERS

3K 
KIDTOBERFEST +
CHRISTKINDERFEST
ATTENDEES



6
FESTHALLEN
PARTNERS



Be Bavarian

September 27 – October 19, 2024