

ZOZA Year in Review



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Message from our Board President and Executive Director

Hallo Freund/Freundin!

This past year has been one of growth as we worked together with volunteers on implementing the goals and objectives of our strategic plan. We proactively delivered on a refreshed vision for the Festival that: offers visitors a world-class experience, builds community engagement and secures our long-term financial viability.

We are delighted to announce that, after several challenging years during and following the pandemic, our 2024 financial results have brought us a measure of financial stability. This achievement is a true testament to the unwavering dedication and hard work of our staff and volunteer teams.

Identifying, celebrating and increasing visibility of women's achievements helps build equality. With a whopping 123 nominations, the 49th Women of the Year event in May 2024, was our largest in history. Over 700 attendees joined in an evening of honour as we recognized 12 incredible community leaders and their many accomplishments.

Not to brag... (well, maybe a little) our Oktoberfest Golf Experience in September was another sold-out success. With beautiful weather, fantastic activations at almost every hole and a terrific silent auction, our golfers thoroughly enjoyed themselves at the Galt Country Club. We are deeply grateful for the support of our new presenting sponsor, Canadian Western Bank!

We intensified our Willkommen Platz programming in 2024 and expanded attendance at KIDtoberfest, DOGtoberfest and our biergartens with an outstanding entertainment lineup that included Nate Haller, Walter Ostanek, My Son the Hurricane and Danny Michel. We added new and exciting initiatives like the Best Caesar in Town competition and Bavarian-themed wrestling matches. Free entry to all events and a family-friendly biergarten, tasty food options and trendy merchandise, helped make the experience inclusive and welcoming for all.

To kick off the Thanksgiving weekend at the Willkommen Platz, we hosted friends and sponsors at our festive Loft Haus reception at the Walper Hotel before heading down to the Official Keg Tapping. Finally, the weather deities were smiling down on us as the keg was tapped in front of a full crowd by Olympian Mandy Bujold and retired professional boxer Syd Vanderpool.

Message from our Board President and Executive Director (Continued)

People lined the streets as TSN basketball insider and analyst "The Coach" Jack Armstrong, joined us as the Grand Parade Marshal – adding a fun, sporty element to our long-established K-W Oktoberfest Thanksgiving Day Parade.

We worked alongside our Festhallen partners to increase and improve communication about our Festival and all that it has to offer. Thanks to a federal grant, we were able to bring in a new staff person last summer to help restore a focus on bringing more tourists to the Festival. This included a new partnership with Go Transit that saw the special "LederGOsen Line" travel from Union Station in Toronto to K-W carrying visitors to experience our unique spirit of Gemütlichkeit.

IMPORTANTLY, WE ARE DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO OUR VOLUNTEERS FOR HELPING US ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN 2024! To each one of our volunteers – please know how much you are valued! Like we said last year, you are the beating heart of our Festival! And, once again, congratulations to our 2024 Volunteers of the Year, Kelly Wilker and Brian Chenier! Thank you for joining us on this journey to reimagine K-W Oktoberfest. We know that 2025 will be another wunderbar year with you as our cheerleaders, allies and partners.

Prost,

Allan & Tracy



Allan Cayenne Board President





Tracy Van Kalsbeek Executive Director

Jray Van Haesbeer

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

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H-W Oktoberfest Inc. Staff Team



TRACY VAN KALSBEEK Executive Director tracy@oktoberfest.ca



LAURIE DAVISON Business Development Manager lauried@oktoberfest.ca



CAROL TUCKER Volunteer & Administration Manager carolt@oktoberfest.ca



SARAHJANE MCNAUGHTON Marketing & Communications Manager sarahjanem@oktoberfest.ca



MANDY SINCLAIR Tourism Coordinator August 2024 - February 2025



VALERIE BORSELLINO Tourism Coordinator valerie@oktoberfest.ca February 2025 - Present

2024 Highlights

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2024 Highlights

VITCHENER WATERLOO

K-W Oktoberfest in the Community

- 17 EVENTS hosted by K-W Oktoberfest
- 10 APPEARANCES by the WunderWagen
- 19 EVENTS hosted by Community Partners
- 35+ EVENTS hosted by Festhallen Partners



K-W Oktoberfest Entertains

- 27 KEG TAPPINGS
- 50+ LIVE BANDS & ENTERTAINERS
- 35K WILLKOMMEN PLATZ Visitors
- 57 ONKEL HANS / TANTE FRIEDA Community Appearances

K-W Oktoberfest Connects

- 5.7M IMPRESSIONS
- 2.3M+ PEOPLE REACHED
- 61.7K+ ENGAGEMENTS
- 43K+ FOLLOWERS











- 123 WOMEN OF THE YEAR Nominees
- 700+ WOMEN OF THE YEAR Attendees
- 144 OKTOBERFEST Golfers
- 37 THANKSGIVING DAY PARADE Marching Bands and Floats
- 527.6K+ WEBSITE VISITS
- 14.5K EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS
- 37 MEDIA ADVISORIES / PRESS RELEASES
- 84 MEDIA HITS



2024 Featured Events

H-W Oktoberfest Rogers Women of the Year - Thursday, May 23, 2024

The 2024 K-W Oktoberfest Rogers Women of the Year event was a remarkable success, celebrating its fourth year with record-breaking nomination numbers. With an impressive 123 nominees, the sold-out event brought together over 700 attendees to honour the extraordinary achievements and contributions of women across Waterloo Region. Among them, 12 recipients were recognized for their inspiring leadership and accomplishments: Arts & Culture: Erin Bow, Community Service: Uzma Bhutto, Entrepreneur 40+: Dr. Cindy Ward, Entrepreneur Under 40: Rebekah Churchyard, Group Achievement: Jill of All Trades, Health & Wellness: Neha Juwale, Lifetime Achievement: Martha George, Professional 40+: Nenone Donaldson, Professional Under 40: Ashley Schuitema, Skilled Trades: Brandi Ferenc, STEM: Linda Li, Young Adult: Kyo Lee.

The evening was filled with celebration, inspiration and community spirit, as friends, family and local dignitaries gathered to recognize these incredible women at the awards event held at Bingemans on May 23rd, with the assistance of our Masters of Ceremonies, Robin & PJ from Mornings on Country 106.7. The event featured guest speakers Tricia Mumby and Martha Breithaupt and local student musicians from Eastwood Collegiate.





Willkommen Platz - October 11-13, 2024

The Willkommen Platz returned to Kitchener City Hall, transforming downtown Kitchener into a vibrant Bavarian village featuring unforgettable live entertainment, delicious food and drink and lively celebrations throughout Thanksgiving weekend.

The official keg tapping by Mandy Bujold and Syd Vanderpool kicked off the celebrations on the Circle K Stage, followed by live music performances, entertainers and wrestling matches. Specialty bars served authentic German biers, Bavarian-inspired cocktails and refreshing mocktails, while craft breweries added to the festive atmosphere with a wide variety of local brews. Free entry to all events and a family-friendly biergarten made the experience inclusive and welcoming to all. With the Best Caesar in Town[®] competition and headline performances by Danny Michel, Walter Ostanek, My Son the Hurricane and Nate Haller, the Willkommen Platz was the ultimate destination to immerse in Bavarian culture.





2024 Featured Events (Continued)

Willkommen Platz - October 11-13, 2024 [continued]

Willkommen Platz Vendor Market: Spanning King Street and inside Kitchener City Hall, this expanded market featured 76 incredible vendors offering everything from Bavarian treats and local crafts to Oktoberfest merch and unique gifts.

KIDtoberfest: The well-loved event, presented by Tim Hortons, found a new home in the Kitchener City Hall Rotunda, making the Festival even more accessible for families. With interactive activities and performances, this move created an enhanced experience for everyone visiting the Willkommen Platz!

DOG to be rfest: Now located at the Gaukel Block, this furry-friendly celebration featured an expanded space with more vendors, interactive activities and demonstrations, costume contests and pet-friendly Oktoberfest treats, creating a fun and welcoming atmosphere for dogs and their owners.

Tourism Highlights

In 2024, K-W Oktoberfest renewed its focus on tourism by inviting visitors to experience the Willkommen Platz, Festhallen and the Thanksgiving Day Parade. Two bus tours were also offered, providing travel agents and their guests with unique festival experiences to help build future tourism.

LederGOsen Line: In partnership with Explore Waterloo Region and Metrolinx, this special GO Transit service from Toronto made it easier than ever for GTA festival-goers to travel to the festivities, helping us welcome more visitors to experience the magic of Oktoberfest in Kitchener-Waterloo.

Eat Stay Play: To better showcase the community, K-W Oktoberfest introduced the 'Eat, Stay, Play at Oktoberfest' initiative, engaging local partners and creating more opportunities for tourists to explore the Region. This initiative invited visitors to explore the best Oktoberfestthemed activities while experiencing all the Festival has to offer.









Oktoberfest Cares

Oktoberfest Cares is a special program designed to support Festival initiatives that enrich our community such as the Onkel Hans Food Drive and keep admission costs low or free for favourites including the Women of the Year celebration and family-friendly events like KIDtoberfest, Willkommen Platz and the Thanksgiving Day Parade. Oktoberfest Cares is our organization's commitment to community collaboration, giving back and growing together.

Oktoberfest Cares Silent Auctions

The Oktoberfest Cares Silent Auction supports community initiatives by raising funds through exciting online auction experiences. Featured at the Women of the Year and Oktoberfest Golf Experience events, the auction showcases unique items and exclusive packages, with proceeds benefiting the Oktoberfest Care initiative. New this year, a strictly online silent auction allowed even more people to participate and bid on fantastic prizes, extending the reach and impact of Oktoberfest Cares.

Onkel Hans Food Drive & Stuff A Bus

The 2024 Stuff-A-Bus campaign featured three events, with donation locations at an Oktoberfest-themed Kitchener Rangers Game, Zehrs Laurentian Plaza and Zehrs Conestoga Mall. In partnership with Grand River Transit (GRT), the Kitchener Rangers and Bell Media, this initiative supported the Food Bank of Waterloo Region, helping to provide meals for those in need.

This year, our Oktoberfest Ambassador candidates joined the Onkel Hans Food Drive, helping to raise awareness and collect donations for this important cause.

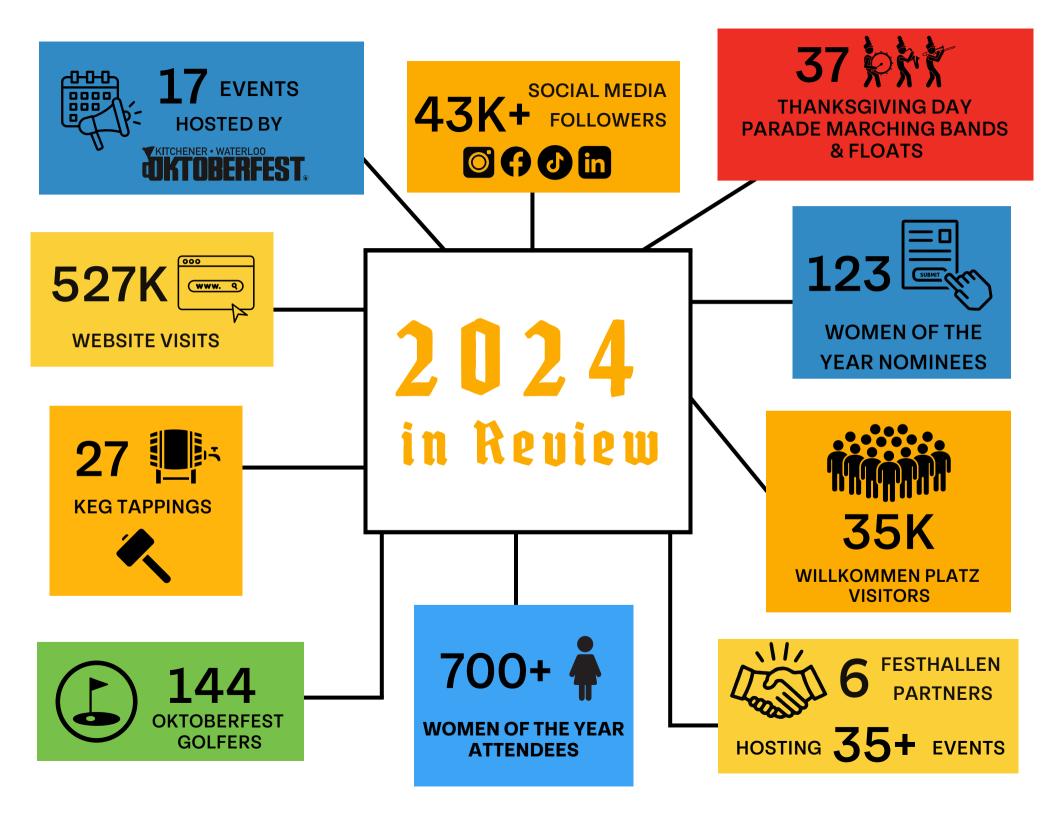
Since 1995, the Onkel Hans Food Drive has made a significant impact in the community. Thanks to generous donors, contributions have totaled over 468,000 pounds of food and \$305,000, providing an incredible 1.2 million meals to date!













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Be Bavarian Join us for the Festival! September 26 – October 18, 2025

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