



Post Register file photo

Celebrating 19 years

Beer Fest continues to grow from humble beginnings

By Alisa Clickenger
For Beer Fest

The key to making a great brew of beer is passion, quality ingredients, attention to detail, the right temperature, and a good clean-up program. The same can be said for a dynamic and successful fundraising event, and nobody knows that better than Gregg Smith of Idaho Falls.

Smith is an award-winning writer, beer judge, brewer and president of the North American Brewers Association. He is also the founder of Idaho Falls' annual Mountain Brewers Beer Festival. Although he prefers to stay in the background and remain (mostly) anonymous, he and his wife Lisa, who is the North American Brewers Association Vice President, are the principal players behind the event.

The festival idea came to Smith 19 years ago, with the purpose of raising money for local charities. And that is still all it's about for him.

"My emphasis is on doing the work and getting this done and raising money for charity. I don't need any recognition or notoriety," Smith said. "The thing I get out of it is being able to help our community. It is a great community, and that's just rewarding in and of itself."

Getting some fresh, local brew in town is, no doubt, a nice perk as well. The Smiths, long time beer aficionados as well as home brewers, have continued to grow the event since its inception when it was just five popup tents behind the Shiloh Inn.

The Mountain Brewers Beer Fest now has more than 40,000 square feet of tent space at San-

dy Downs, with seven thousand beer enthusiasts in attendance last year.

"It's kind of got a life of its own," said Smith.

As for growing pains, for an event this large, they have been remarkably few. Perhaps that's because the Smiths keep it simple. According to Lisa, they have had the same basic formula for the event even as it's grown to epic proportions. Simple, to them, means five areas of focus: beer, music, food, raffle and clean-up.

"The bigger it's gotten the easier it's gotten," said Lisa.

They have a core group of volunteer organizers, each of whom executes a certain function. Instead of laboring over the event all year, each core organizer has their own area of expertise, and they take complete responsibility for it. And after the event they have a full-day retreat/meeting to go over the event and change, tweak, and adjust for growth.

What are some of the lessons learned over the years? 1. Donkey drops are a disaster. (A donkey drop is a game of chance in which bets are taken on where a free-roaming donkey will, well, make a donkey drop. 2. Food is important. (In one of the early years there was a mad crush of taxis and pizza delivery vehicles at the front gate. Lesson learned.) 3. Put the year on the T-shirts. (The one year they did not include the year in the T-shirt design, Beer Festival devotees complained bitterly that it affected their collection.)

The Mountain Brewers Beer Festival has now raised more than \$700,000 over the course of the last 18 years. One reason is that there's no free

See Smith, page 7



Get Up To \$75
In Visa Gift Cards*

When you install DISH TV and SpeedConnect Internet

- Fast, friendly, local service!
- Available in town and in the country!
- Free HotSpot, VOIP or WiFi also available!

Ask about a free
gift when you
install DISH!*



Snake River Satellite
208-785-8552

Some restrictions apply • Call for details

Food vendors

- BJ's Bayou - Cajun
- Keltner Concessions - Gyros
- T&T's Dynamite Dogs - Dogs!
- Billman's - Burgers
- Ruby Tuesday - Chicken & Salads
- Aaron's Chew-Choo - Fish & kid stuff
- Roma Stone Woodfired Pizza
- Famous Dave's BBQ

Bands

- Galaxy Forest
- In Ship Down
- Break the Broken

Sponsors

- Breaking Boundaries
- River Discovery
- Tautphaus Park Zoological Society



Submitted photo
Gregg Smith started the Mountain Brewers Beer Fest 19 years ago.

How to get tickets

2013 Beer Fest tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the gate. You can buy tickets online at www.mbbf.org or at the following locations:

Ammon:

The Cellar
The Firehouse Grill

Idaho Falls:

DB's
The Frosty Gator
Idaho Brewing
Marcellar's
Vino Rosso
Snow Eagle

Pocatello:

The Grapevine: 232-5218
Portneuf Valley Brewing: 232-1644

Blackfoot:

The Wine Garden: 785-1681
Tumbleweed Saloon: 782-0048 (Charlie)

Boise:

Big Horn At The Ram: 208-345-2929 (Jake)

Utah:

Bohemian Brewing: 801-566-5474 Jo /Nancy
Rooster's: 801-627-6171 (Julie)
Uinta: 801-467-0909 (Becky)

Smith

Continued from page 6

ride. There are no salaries, no stipends, and no rented space. They rely heavily on the core group of volunteer organizers, with legions of others donating their time and energies.

The charity organizations they donate to aren't just handed funds, either. Those organizations are also asked to have a stake in the event. They are asked to provide a certain number of volunteers, raffle prizes, and to help with set up and tear down. This way the charities are much more invested in the outcome.

The Beer Festival would not be complete without the beer. Local beer distributors Golden Eagle

Sales and Watkins Distributing have been vital to the success of the event, as well as a great many other regional breweries that contribute.

"It's their donations, their time, their energies that make the event," said Gregg.

Always the first Saturday in June, the event takes place rain or shine June 1, 2013. Beer Fest tickets are \$25 in advance and \$30 at the gate. There are shuttle buses for the event that begin running at 11:30 a.m. and run approximately every 30-40 minutes. Buses run from several Idaho Falls locations until 7 p.m. For more details see <http://www.northamericanbrewers.org/>.



The Tautphaus Park Zoo, "The Best Little Zoo in the West" features Idaho's largest collection of wildlife. The Zoo is accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) and, as such, meets stringent requirements for animal care and enrichment. Tautphaus Park Zoo is a leader in conservation and participates in 35 Species Survival Plans which involve working with other facilities and the AZA to help save endangered species. Our zoo is also a leader in conservation and wildlife education and offers many classes and camps focused on providing children a fun and rewarding educational program. The Zoo is well loved by the community and provides a fun family experience. The Zoo is owned and operated by the City of Idaho Falls. The Tautphaus Park Zoological Society is a non-profit volunteer organization that supports the Tautphaus Park Zoo. The Society's primary mission is to raise funds to support Zoo enhancements and needs through memberships and fundraising events. The Tautphaus Park Zoological Society appreciates the opportunity to team with Breaking Boundaries and provide support to the North American Brewers Association Mountain Brewer's 2013 Beer Fest.

Please visit us at: www.idahofallszoo.org