

Atlantic City hopes for success with first North to Shore Festival

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Vincent Jackson

Officials connected to music and art events for the first Jersey North to Shore Festival hope the scheduled programs will entice visitors to come to Atlantic City just as the summer vacation season starts.

The idea of the festival is to offer art, comedy, film and technology events over several days at multiple venues in one municipality to bring vacationers to three different cities during three separate weeks this month.

Atlantic City is first with the most dates from Sunday through June 11. Asbury Park is next from June 14 to 18. Newark closes out the festival June 21 to 25.

"I think that as a whole, the events we are planning are strong enough to attract a broad audience because it provides visitors not only enough to make a day of it in Atlantic City but an excellent opportunity to extend their stay," said Michael Cagno, executive director of the Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University in Atlantic City.

The Arts Garage received a \$4,000 grant from the state to pay for the weeklong programming it is offering during the festival, including a Story Slam on Wednesday and the Stockton Dance Company on June 9, Cagno said.

The Legendary Blue Notes, who recorded such hits as "Bad Luck," "The Love I Lost" and "Wake Up Everybody," would not be performing for free June 10 at Rhythm & Spirits on South Tennessee Avenue without a few thousand dollars the state provided to the venue, owner Mark Callazzo said.

North to Shore organizers reached out to Callazzo in January to see if he wanted to be involved. Besides the Blue Notes, Rhythm & Spirits also will offer a flamenco guitarist June 8 and brunch parties with a DJ on June 10 and 11 with no charge for admission.

"It's exciting. Anything that hopes to shine a light on non-casino events is a positive," Callazzo said. "It's a great showcase for what Atlantic City has besides casinos."

Hayday Coffee is hosting the Atlantic City Arts Foundation's "Community Canvas" Living Mural Project from Monday through June 11. The mural will be installed at the Hayday Coffee Community Canvas, located next to Hayday on South New York Avenue, said Evan Sanchez, co-founder of Authentic City Partners, which owns Hayday Coffee.

"North to Shore is a really special event, combining global headliners with programming from local producers, nonprofits and businesses," Sanchez said. "It's always great to see the state investing in local programming and supporting the growth of Atlantic City from within."

Besides the separate Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall arena shows of Latin pop singer Ricardo Arjona and an R&B concert headlined by Jazmine Sullivan, the biggest Atlantic City concerts affiliated with North to

Shore will likely be Dropkick Murphys on Saturday and 311 on Sunday, both of which are part of the Atlantic City Beer and Music Festival at Bader Field.

The beer festival, an institution in its 17th year that is typically held during the first weekend in June, attracted 24,000 people by itself in 2019 before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jon Henderson, owner of Good Time Tricycle Productions, which produces the event, said he expected 15,000 people to buy tickets to the beer festival, but he was happy to be included in advertising and the website for North to Shore.

“They (North to Shore) have to do it once to figure out what works or doesn’t work,” Henderson said.

Derek Jones, the station manager at WGLS-FM 89.7 at Rowan University in Glassboro, said the Newark leg of the festival is the best of the three, with concerts by Santana, Halsey, Alanis Morissette, comedian Bill Burr, Natalie Merchant and an evening with Stephen Colbert and Jim Gaffigan.

“The most sizzle is in Newark,” Jones said.

Even though Newark has the better lineup, convincing people to travel there during the summer to attend North to Shore events will be tricky, Jones said. Weekend attractions will be able to draw an audience, but he was skeptical of activities scheduled on weekdays.

“If you are a shore person, there is something else to do,” Jones said, adding festival events can always be supplemented with a trip to the beach in Atlantic City or Asbury Park.

One of the bigger North to Shore events scheduled for Atlantic City is a concert by singer-songwriters Colbie Caillat and Gavin DeGraw on June 9 in the Adrian Philips Theater at Boardwalk Hall.

Heather DeLuca, midday weekday host at hot adult contemporary radio station WSJO-FM 104.9, has been doing on-air ticket giveaways to the Caillat and DeGraw concert along with the Merchant and Morissette shows in Newark. DeLuca plans to attend the Caillat and DeGraw concert.

“What a fantastic thing. There is something for everybody,” DeLuca said about the North to Shore Festival. “They are uniting the state through live entertainment. It doesn’t get better than that. ... I think it was interesting enough right out of the gate. It’s a big thing that you don’t want to miss.”

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