2019
Sponsor Report
Weather, as always, played a major role with the festival. February and March were very cold, causing both daffodils and tulips to bloom later than normal. Visitors actually got a bonus because of the cold weather – the season was compressed, bringing early, mid and late blooming tulips all together for most of the festival. We welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors to the Valley, taking home memories and leaving their dollars behind. They came from eight Canadian provinces, every state, and numerous other countries! Overall attendance was up about 10%, with the busiest weekend logged on April 27 and 28. Visitors were still able to come and see tulips during early May.

None of this would have been possible without the strong financial and emotional support of our sponsors who help make Skagit Valley a better place to live, work, and play...thank you!

As usual, we received excellent media coverage from the Skagit Valley Herald, the Bellingham Herald and the Seattle Times, as well as other publications in Western Washington. The Festival was featured in AAA Western Journey magazine (on the cover) and North Sound Life Bellingham Alive.

We were excited to be chosen by Conde Noste Traveller as one of the 9 Must See Flower and Garden Shows from around
the world – the picture appeared on the lead-in for the article in cntravellerme.com! Here’s what they said about us:

“An annual festival since 1984, it lasts throughout the month of April and celebrates vibrant tulips blooming across the region. Along with a variety of tulips on display, the festival also hosts several art shows and galleries, such as a quilt display, show gardens, bike tours and the annual Tulip Run. Events such as the Downtown Mount Vernon Street Fair and the Kiwanis Salmon Barbecue run for several days during the festival, with an array of gourmet eateries and live entertainment.”

KOMO TV’s Eric Johnson featured Tulip Town in and Eric’s Little Hero’s segment during April. This became especially appropriate as 2019 progressed. Tulip Town was sold to new owners (more about that later) and Tom DeGoede died in June 2019. He is and will continue to be missed.

Q13’s Ellen Tailor made a visit to the festival in mid-April as did KING 5’s Jordan Wilkerson. We are fortunate for the extensive coverage our local TV stations give the festival – throughout the month crews from all four major stations came to film and show off the tulip bloom.

We’re pleased to have Skagit Publishing, an Official Sponsor, to host and maintain our official website, www.tulipfestival.org. Activity on our website remains strong, with 450,205 new users during 2019. Those users generated over 1.5 million page views.

Most individuals were from the United States, followed by Canada. The most popular pages were the bloom update page and the events page, followed by “Getting Here.” Use of a mobile device to connect is still popular, with 50% of our traffic using Safari to
search for our website. Owners of over 2,000 different types of devices accessed www.tulipfestival.org.

Users also accessed our interactive map page, with points linking them to locations, hours, and websites of our sponsors. Our friends at BNSF sponsor the interactive map, recognizing the need to foster better communication and help with more efficient travel. We helped tulip fans track how the bloom was doing, thanks to our Bloom Information sponsor Alaska Federal Credit Union (158,000+ users clicked to check on the bloom status). Shell Puget Sound Refinery provided a glimpse of tulip growth through the Bloom Box.

Facebook exposure continues to grow, with about 67,000 followers of our page. We use the page throughout the year to welcome new sponsors, share information about events in the Skagit Valley and keep our friends informed about the flower fields. During the Festival, we’re busiest, of course, as fans post pictures, respond to our posts, and generally stay in touch with the Festival.

Our most popular posts this year were our almost daily updates during April on how the blooms were doing and travel tips. Our most popular post, with 62,525 views, was on April 11. It stated: “We have tulips blooming! Come and see them! These pictures were taken on April 10 at RoozenGaarde and Tulip Town.”
Of course, planning a local festival with an international reputation takes a lot of organization and work. The festivities officially begin in November, at our annual Unveiling Celebration sponsored by our good friends at Heritage Bank. The unveiling, which takes place at Skagit Valley Gardens in Mount Vernon, is the first opportunity to see the new poster and products for the upcoming Festival. The 2019 poster featured the artwork of Ben Mann, a Bellingham artist, and was well received by the close to 300 guests in attendance. Working with Skagit County Chambers of Commerce, we were happy to include this as a county-wide "After Hours Event."

Guests feasted on treats from great restaurants (and sponsors) Max Dale's Steak & Chop House, Swinomish Casino & Lodge, Big Scoop Sundae Palace, Applebee's, and Olive Garden.

Guests also got to sample the 2019 Official Beer from Anacortes Brewery & Rockfish Grill; wine from Pasek Cellars Winery; coffee from Fidalgo Bay Coffee Roasters; chocolate from Forte Artisan Chocolates; and cider from Tulip Valley Vineyard. The beautiful jewelry from Warren Jewelers was also on display as was our 2019 apparel and merchandise from Bergsma Galleries.

With the unveiling behind us, the staff turned its attention to the Official Skagit Valley Tulip Festival brochure, to be printed for distribution beginning in mid-January. The 200,000 copies feature the graphic
work of Guy Corp from grafixCORP in Mount Vernon and went in the mail to over 3,000 tulip fans around the world and our sponsors. A total of 85,000 were distributed from Tacoma to Metro Vancouver, British Columbia as well as on Washington State Ferries. The brochures are popular from January through late summer as they’re full of information about local activities, lodging, and restaurants. The centerfold map is especially handy.

On February 6, fourth and fifth grade children and fans journeyed to Maple Hall in La Conner, the site of our annual Tulip Festival Ambassador program sponsored by KeyBank. Prior to the program, Festival staff visited dozens of classrooms throughout Skagit County, meeting hundreds of fourth and fifth grade students as they outlined the process of being named Ambassador. Some 50 students took us up on the offer. Judges scored the contestants based on their answer to: “Why do you want to be a Tulip Ambassador?” and surprise questions such as “What is your favorite subject in school and why? At the end of the evening, Izel Morales, from West View Elementary in Burlington, and Olivia Olson, from Washington Elementary in Mount Vernon, were chosen to represent us as 2019 Ambassadors.

As has become a tradition, their first appearance was the following morning, being interviewed on local radio stations KAPS and KBRC and, of course, they saw their pictures in the Skagit Valley Herald shortly after. They enjoyed a behind-the-scenes tour at RoozenGaarde/Washington Bulb Company and greeted visitors at the PACCAR Open House, rode in the Washington Federal/Kiwanis
“Not-so-Impromptu” Parade in La Conner, helped at the Opening Gala and the street fair. They made a trip to Olympia to meet with Governor Jay Inslee and presented a poster to Secretary of State Kim Wyman. To round out a busy spring, in late May the Ambassadors and their families enjoyed a “behind the seams” tour of Safeco Field and a ball game, thanks to the Seattle Mariners. Our Ambassadors and their families work hard to share the good news of the Festival and we’re so grateful.

Because we enjoy supporting our community, the Festival teamed with the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce for an information booth at the SICBA Home and Garden Show in March.

On March 28, we were happy to welcome our guests to the Opening Gala, held at the Swinomish Casino and Resort in Anacortes, sponsored by our friends at Peoples Bank and Judd & Black Appliance. The excellent food and company were enjoyed by all. The Sedro-Woolley High School Chamber Choir charmed the audience with their performance. Dozens of local businesses helped us out by donating items for our popular raffle, as well.

The Director’s Award is an annual award presented to those who go beyond expectations to serve the mission of the Festival. This year Cindy was pleased to present the award to Jody Bergsma who designed, sold and distributed the official merchandise for the festival from 2015 to 2019.

The 25th Annual Skagit County Parks and Recreation Tulip Basketball Tournament, involving dozens of teams of fourth through eighth grade girls
and boys. The late March event was a boon for our local lodging sponsors as teams came from throughout the Northwest, with parents in tow!

The Festival began in earnest on April 1, which was the first day fans could enter photos in our sixth annual North Coast Credit Union Photo Contest. Our judges sorted through close to 450 entries to select our winners. Each winner received a signed 2019 Festival poster. The beautiful tulip photos throughout this report were taken by tulip fans who entered the photo contest.

The start of April also brought the opening of art shows throughout the county and the Kiwanis Salmon BBQ, which ran through April 28.

A new event that joined us this year was the Skagit Chili and Chowder Cookoff, a fundraiser for the Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce, held at Farmstrong Brewing Company, featuring mouth-watering samples. Voting was simple – try some out and then vote for your favorite. Lots was going on at the end of March and beginning of April, including the Skagit Farm to Pint Festival, and the Tulip Run.

Residents of Skagit County took a break on April 10 as many took advantage of Locals Night, a way for the good folks at Tulip Town to thank the community for their patience during the busy Festival. In addition to touring the fields, visitors danced to a combo, enjoyed visiting the gift shop, were refreshed with coffee and wine, and enjoyed being part of our gorgeous community.
The Washington Federal "Not-so-Impromptu" Parade, always a hit, was led by Kiwanian Dale Irvine as Grand Marshal on April 13. He preceded 32 entries in the parade through the streets of La Conner as the sun came out just in time for the parade. We are grateful for the on-going support from the Kiwanians of La Conner, both in the planning and in the presentation of the annual event.

Earlier in the day, many parade goers and others visited the annual PACCAR Open House, the only day each year the facility is open to the public. That second weekend in April also found lots to do in Mount Vernon with the Garage Sale, Antiques and More at the Fairgrounds.

Easter weekend was great weather and very busy! Mount Vernon Downtown Association brought us their street fair, the tulips were blooming, and bicycle enthusiasts rode 20-, 40-, or 60-miles during the Tulip Pedal Bike ride. The festival ended with flurry of activities. Sedro-Woolley’s Woodfest weekend of activities (including a Pinewood Derby and a professional chainsaw carving exhibition) attracted many visitors looking to find their favorite hidden gem.

Princesses and Heroes visited the Children’s Museum of Skagit County (new location at the Outlet Shoppes in Burlington) for the Opus Bank Princess/Herò Party. Enchanting Events brought Cinderella and Spider Guy to life, to the delight of the crowd who attended.
The Burlington Fire Department showed the heroes-to-be how to don fire gear, run an obstacle course, and, of course, how to put out a fire with a real hose and water! Cinderella fans learned the Princess wave and made their own princess crowns.

Burlington was also the home of the Kids Scrapbooking and Crafting Supply Sale, taking place April 27 – lots of kids left with plenty of supplies for their projects.

Community Action’s 10th Annual Have a Heart Run enjoyed clear skies for their teams helping to raise funds to support people working to get out of poverty. Fans also ventured out to enjoy the Anacortes Vintage Market.

The Festival truly is an endeavor undertaken by people throughout the county and, indeed, throughout Western Washington. Although we rely heavily on our good sponsors, we also count on hours and hours of support from our volunteers. During April, we saw Festival volunteers donate over 420 hours, plus many hours donated by local high school students. Our volunteer program enjoys wonderful moral and financial support from Creekside Continuing Care Community in Burlington and has for several years.

The end of 2019 marked a change for the festival with new owners at Tulip Town. The Spinach Bus Ventures group brings lots of energy and ideas for new and exciting things at Tulip Town. Headed by Rachael Ward Sparwasser
We continually strive to improve the Festival, trying our best to make this year’s Festival better than last. Thanks to our growers for continually working hard year-round to produce the incomparable gorgeous fields enjoyed by so many. Thanks to each of our sponsors for trusting us to make your commitment to us one of which you can be proud.

As a reminder that our local festival has an international reputation, we’re pleased to share that we earned the Silver Pinnacle Award from the International Festival and Events Association for our 2018 poster at the annual convention.

Mark your calendar for November 7, 2019 when we’ll enjoy the Unveiling Celebration of our 2020 poster and merchandise at Skagit Valley Gardens, sponsored by Heritage Bank, and kick off our 37th Skagit Valley Tulip Festival!