



MEDIA CONTACTS: Aimee Boyd  
Mark Shallcross  
502.584.6383

**The Kentucky Derby Festival  
Master Fact Sheet**  
As of November 21, 2007

**The 2008 Kentucky Derby Festival: April 11 – May 2**

Held annually during the two weeks immediately preceding the Kentucky Derby on the first Saturday in May, the Kentucky Derby Festival is a community-wide celebration that features more than 70 events and attracts crowds in excess of 1.5 million people. The Festival's Opening Ceremonies, Thunder Over Louisville, kicks off the Festival in April. Thunder is the largest annual fireworks show in North America and the biggest annual single-day event in the Southeast.

The Kentucky Derby Festival got its start in 1956 with a budget of \$640. Instrumental in bringing the festival to life were four community and business leaders: Earl Ruby, Addison F. McGhee, Ray Wimberg and Basil Caummisar. The festival featured just one event that first year – the Pegasus Parade through downtown Louisville, which attracted a crowd of about 50,000. The premise of the early festival was to “create a celebration allowing the entire community to take part in the excitement surrounding the Kentucky Derby.” Churchill Downs racetrack – the site of the world's most famous horse race – contributed \$100 to the festival's first budget. An unofficial version of the festival was first held in 1935, with a parade, wrestling match, concert and fireworks show. It was unable to sustain itself after three years, however, due to lack of interest and the catastrophic flood of 1937.

In the early 1960s, more activities were added to the festival's event schedule, including the Great Steamboat Race in 1963. The festival board made an effort in the 1970s to stabilize the private, not-for-profit organization. The festival at that time became part of the Chamber of Commerce and the board was expanded to include local movers and shakers. New events were added, such as the Chow Wagon, Great Balloon Race, miniMarathon, and the Run for the Rose'. With the added stability of widespread community support, the festival has each year become more diverse and successful.

The Kentucky Derby Festival Inc. employs a full-time staff of 22 and has a 75-member Board of Directors that represents a cross-section of the community. No longer a division of the Chamber, the Festival is a non-profit organization that must raise its funding through corporate sponsorship and individual support. The Festival is also dependent on a dedicated base of volunteers for manpower. Each year, more than 4,000 citizens devote their time and energy to help produce the annual celebration. More than 350 corporate sponsors and thousands of individual donors help fund the Festival mission to produce quality entertainment that enhances the entire community and brings it together.

## **President and CEO**

Michael E. Berry has served as President and CEO of the Kentucky Derby Festival since 1997. Berry is responsible for overseeing the production, promotion and coordination of more than 70 events during the two-week Festival. As Vice President and Managing Director of the Derby Festival, Berry served as the Chief Operating Officer for eight years. He previously served stints as the Festival's Director of Marketing and Corporate Relations and an Events Coordinator, beginning his Derby Festival career in 1986.

**2008 Chairman of the Board:** Nancy Norris

## **MAJOR EVENTS OF THE 2008 KENTUCKY DERBY FESTIVAL**

From hundreds of thousands of people lining the shores of the Ohio River to witness the magic of Thunder Over Louisville to 10,000 runners struggling to complete the Marathon and miniMarathon to historic paddleboats steaming toward the finish line of the Great Steamboat Race, the Derby Festival involves thousands of Louisville area residents and visitors. The Festival is also a mirror of the community – events are attended by people representing all age, educational, geographic and income groups.

Annual attendance at all Derby Festival events exceeds 1.5 million people. A 2001 independent study concluded that the Festival produced an estimated economic impact of \$93.6 million to the local economy each year. Thunder Over Louisville alone created an impact of \$31 million. The study estimated that Derby Festival events generate \$17 for the local economy for every one dollar spent by the Festival.

Nearly 70 events comprise the Kentucky Derby Festival schedule. Most of the events are produced in-house by the Festival staff and volunteers. Some events are produced by other community groups that have arranged to be a part of the official Derby Festival schedule. For a complete list, check [www.kdf.org](http://www.kdf.org). These are some of the marquee events for the Festival's 2008 Celebration.

### **Derby Festival Spelling Bee**

Date: Saturday, March 15  
Time: 11 a.m.  
Place: Churchill Downs – Triple Crown Room  
Cost: Free to spectators  
Sponsors: Kentucky Farm Bureau and Churchill Downs Inc.

First held in 1994, the Derby Festival Spelling Bee has grown into one of the Festival's most far-reaching events for regional participation, attracting county and school district champions from all over Kentucky and Southern Indiana. Through a process of elimination, the competition is eventually pared to the final two participants competing for the title of Spelling Bee Champion. When one of the students misspells a word, the other must spell it correctly and then correctly spell an additional word to win the event.

The Derby Festival Spelling Bee Champion receives an all-expense paid trip to Washington, D.C., to represent the state in the finals of the National Spelling Bee, produced by Scripps.

### **They're Off! Luncheon**

Date: Friday, April 11  
Time: 11:30 a.m.  
Place: Galt House East Grand Ballroom  
Cost: \$66 per person and Galt House parking fee  
Sponsor: Norton Healthcare

The Derby Festival's second-oldest event, the They're Off! Luncheon was the first official event held in the Galt House Hotel when it opened in 1972. Borrowing a phrase from the horse racing industry, the annual They're Off! Luncheon is the first official event on the Festival's main two-week event schedule.

In addition to kicking off the Festival's spring activities, the Luncheon also honors distinguished individuals or groups by presenting the Golden Horseshoe Award and the Distinguished Service Award. Developed by Festival co-founder Ray Wimberg, the "They're Off! Luncheon" was first held in 1957 with a modest audience of 200. That initial Luncheon honored former jockey Roscoe Goose, who had been the rider of 1913 Kentucky Derby winner Donerail, a 90-1 shot.

Guests at the They're Off! Luncheon have seen a number of historic moments. The concept for the Breeder's Cup was first introduced by John Gaines at the 1982 luncheon. Past speakers have included Mike Ditka, Rick Pitino, Denny Crum, Howard Cosell, Dick Vitale, Hank Aaron, Phil Simms, George Plimpton, Bettina Gregory, Bob Costas, Al McGuire, Magic Johnson, James Earl Jones, Lily Tomlin, Terry Bradshaw and Boomer Esiason.

### **Thunder Over Louisville**

Date: Saturday, April 12  
Time: FoodFest begins at 11 a.m., Air Show at 3 p.m., Fireworks at 9:30 p.m.  
Place: Louisville and S. Indiana riverfronts, Waterfront Park, River Road  
Cost: Free  
Economic Impact: In excess of \$31 million  
Info: Derby Festival Office (502) 584-6383; [www.thunderoverlouisville.org](http://www.thunderoverlouisville.org)  
Sponsors: Caesars Indiana, E.ON U.S., Meijer and UPS

Thunder Over Louisville, the Derby Festival's Opening Ceremonies, annually attracts crowds in excess of 700,000 to both shores of the Ohio River. The Air Show and fireworks spectacle is the largest annual single-day event in the southeastern United States. The event has received international exposure through features on such cable TV networks as The Discovery Channel and an annual Fourth of July rebroadcast via the Armed Forces Radio and Television Service to U.S. military personnel stationed in 200 countries around the world.

The Thunder Air Show is ranked among the top five shows in the country, featuring about 100 military and civilian aircraft and aerial acrobatic and skydiving teams. The air show builds to the day's finale. The 30-minute fireworks show features the latest in pyrotechnic technology, with products from fireworks manufacturers from around the globe, including a signature two-mile fireworks waterfall off the Second Street Bridge. Fireworks fans travel from all over the world to witness an event that can be seen for miles around. Zambelli Internationale, America's "First Family of Fireworks," has helped produce the show for more than a decade.

### **Fifth Third Bank \$1 Million Dollar Hole-In-One Contest**

Date: Thursday, April 17 – Sunday, April 27  
Time: April 17-26: 10 AM – 8:30 PM; April 27: 10 AM-5 PM, Semi-finals 6 PM  
Place: Water Tower at Zorn and River Road  
Cost: \$1 per shot, spectator admission is free  
Sponsor: Fifth Third Bank

Held primarily as a fund-raising event for the Festival, the Hole-In-One has been on the schedule since 1990. More than 3500 shots are taken over 11 days, with at least four people advancing to the Finals in each day of competition.

Daily winners receive prizes and an opportunity to shoot for the million at the Finals, held Tuesday following the 10-day preliminaries. Each finalist gets one shot at the green set up 150 yards away. If any finalist hits a hole-in-one, they win \$1 million paid out as a 20-year annuity. In the event of no hole-in-one, the closest to the pin receives a vacation package. The \$1 million has yet to be awarded. Perhaps 2008 is the year.

### **Fillies' Derby Ball**

Date: Friday, April 18  
Time: 6:30 pm Cocktails; 7:30pm Queen's Coronation; 8 pm Dinner  
Place: Galt House East Grand Ballroom  
Cost: Tickets \$150 each or \$300 per couple

Since 1959, The Fillies, Inc. a support organization of Kentucky Derby Festival, have been producing the Derby Ball. The ball, at which the Derby Festival Queen is crowned, was first held in 1957 and was then known as the Coronation Ball. It was during Derby Festival Chairman Frank Rankin's term – 1959 – that Mrs. William Golden Davis created the Fillies organization and staged the first Fillies' Ball.

Five young women are selected by a Fillies screening committee to serve as Derby Festival Princesses, with one chosen as Queen on the night of the Fillies' Derby Ball. The Queen is chosen by the traditional spin-of-the-wheel, performed by the reigning Fillies President. In addition, two people are named Knights or Dames of the Court of Pegasus for their service to the Festival and the community. The gala evening, fit for a Queen, is a grand affair representing the tradition of southern hospitality.

### **adidas Derby Festival Basketball Classic**

Date: Saturday, April 19  
Time: 7 p.m.  
Place: Freedom Hall  
Cost: Tickets cost \$10 and \$15 reserved  
Sponsor: adidas

The adidas Derby Festival Basketball Classic has showcased some of the top prep basketball talent in the nation for three decades. Local fans look forward to getting a sneak peak at high school seniors before they move on to prominence at the collegiate and professional levels. The 1987 Classic set two records: more than \$78,000 was raised for charities and it set an all-time attendance record for a high school All-Star basketball game with a crowd of 19,041.

The evening before the Classic is eagerly anticipated by hoops fans. The Night of the Future Stars allows attendees to see the players up close as they take part in the Slam Dunk, Two-on-Two and Three-Point Shooting competitions. An autograph-signing session following the exhibition is another highlight of the event. Among players who have performed in past Basketball Classics are: Jamal Mashburn, Moses Malone, Isiah Thomas, Dominique Wilkins, Darrell Griffith, Sam Perkins, Pervis Ellison, Len Bias, Rex Chapman, Penny Hardaway, Dajuan Wagner and Derek Anderson.

### **Kroger's Kentucky Derby Fest-a-Ville on the Waterfront & Chow Wagon**

Date: Thursday, April 24 – Friday, May 2  
Time: Open daily 11 a.m.-11 p.m.; Sunday 1-11 p.m.  
Place: Waterfront Park  
Cost: Admission is a 2008 Pegasus Pin

Kroger's Kentucky Derby Fest-a-Ville on the Waterfront is the Ultimate Entertainment Experience, featuring national, regional and local music acts, walk-in movies, family fun, interactive children's areas, traveling displays, ethnic food concessions, traditional Derby Festival events and much more. This is the second year for Fest-a-Ville and it promises to be more spectacular than ever, with a 500,000-square foot venue located on the banks of the Ohio River.

First held in 1972 when Philip Morris brought its "Marlboro Chuckwagon" mobile kitchen to downtown Louisville for a Derby breakfast, the Chow Wagons have become one of the most widely recognized and popular Derby Festival activities. Chow Wagon locations have moved throughout the city over the years as different properties became available. Remaining free to the public with a Pegasus Pin, the community turns out in droves to celebrate the Festival with traditional Chow Wagon food fare and nightly musical entertainment. Peak attendance of 240,000 was reached in 1991 during a beautiful 10-day weather run.

Much of the success of the Chow Wagons is due to the enthusiastic support of local radio stations, which have broadcast live from the venues for many years. The live broadcasts have created additional excitement and provided exposure for the stations, as well as for the national, regional and local musical acts performing on the Budweiser True Music Stage at Waterfront Park. The ingredients that have remained constant in the recipe for this Festival favorite are great music, great carnival-style food, the low-cost admission and the desire for the community to celebrate spring and the Derby Festival in an old-fashioned "neighborhood block party" of sorts.

### **U.S. Bank Derby Festival Great BalloonFest**

Date: Thursday, April 24 – Saturday, April 26  
Time: 7 a.m. liftoffs for races and 9 p.m. start for Glow on Friday  
8:30 p.m. start for Glimmer on Thursday  
Place: Kentucky Exposition Center ( Launch field off South Wing ) for races and glows. Waterfront Park – Great Lawn for glimmer on Thursday  
Cost: Admission is 2008 Pegasus Pin; \$5 KFEC parking fee  
Sponsor: U.S. Bank

The Great Balloon Race was first held in 1973, having been conceived by area restaurateur and Festival board member Ed Hasenour, as a family-oriented event that would add color and pageantry to the Festival schedule. Hot-air ballooning did not have

much of a local history at that time. The 11 participating pilots came from out of town for the inaugural race at Iroquois Park, including Ed Yost, a pioneer and developer of hot-air ballooning and industrialist Malcolm Forbes. Within a few years, the Great Balloon Race grew into one of the most prestigious such races in the country and was copied by several other festivals. A full field at the current launch site is 50 chase balloons with one hare.

For both the Friday and Saturday morning races, the balloons lift off in an aerial chase of the Hare Balloon, with winds determining which direction they will go. The Hare Balloon stays aloft until it finds a suitable place to land, preferably in a vacant field. It lands and lays out a large fabric "X" as the target, then takes to the air again. The Hounds (the competing balloons) follow the Hare in hot pursuit, trying to throw a small bag of Kentucky Bluegrass seed as close to the "X" as possible, all without landing.

The U.S. Bank Great Balloon Glow offers pilots an additional opportunity to showcase their balloons to the public. Crowds in excess of 70,000 have attended the evening spectacle. Balloons of all shapes and sizes inflate in their launch position on the field, but do not ascend. They are lit against the blackness of the night sky, creating a spectacular sight. The Friday evening glow will be choreographed to a live musical performance.

### **Derby Festival miniMarathon and Marathon**

Date: Saturday, April 26  
Time: 7:30 a.m.  
Place: Iroquois Park to Market and Sixth streets  
Cost: \$35 miniMarathon, \$60 Marathon

From its humble beginnings, the Derby Festival miniMarathon has grown into one of the top three half-marathon road races in the United States according to US Track & Field. More than 10,000 competitors turn out every year to tackle the challenging 13.1-mile course. Started in 1974, the event has been held annually on the last Saturday in April since 1980. The "mini" has seen a lot of changes over the years. Stop watches and clip boards have been replaced by sophisticated timing devices and computers that record each competitor's time accurately in hundredths of seconds.

The miniMarathon, which is now held in conjunction with the 26.2-mile Derby Festival Marathon, is now in its 35th running. The race is known nationally for its superior organization, scenic route and tremendous volunteer support. For as large and sophisticated as the race has become, it is still very much a community event. From the elite runners to the back of the pack, a feeling of accomplishment is evident on the faces of all participants. Even more excitement was added to the day of racing with the addition of the Derby Festival Marathon in 2002.

### **Stock Yards Bank Great Bed Races**

Date: Monday, April 28  
Time: Action begins at 6 p.m.  
Place: Broadbent Arena  
Cost: Admission is a 2008 Pegasus Pin  
Sponsor: Stock Yards Bank & Trust Company

One of the Derby Festival's wildest and most unpredictable events is the Great Bed Races, held every year since 1990. The Great Bed Races combine the pageantry and

spectacle of the Pegasus Parade with the strategy and drama of the Great Steamboat Races. Contestants often spend countless hours creating their wildly decorated racing vehicles – beds, built to exacting specifications – but the event is still contested with a sense of friendly rivalry and good sportsmanship.

Entrants participate in one of four divisions: the Open Division, which races 900 feet; the Fun Division, which races 600 feet; Best Costume and Best Theme Depiction. Contestants compete in two-bed heats, with four runners pushing the beds and one driver steering it. Entries must have four wheels touching the ground; all beds must include a mattress and steering mechanism and meet strict size specifications. Team members often are dressed in keeping with the theme of their particular entry, with no limit on creativity of costumes or outrageousness. Each team has a chance to showcase its costumes and bed entry during a pre-race parade around the racing surface. The beds in the Best Costume Division sometimes race in the Open Division, but often don't survive intact during the entire half-lap run.

### **Arison Run for the Rose'**

Date: Tuesday, April 29  
Time: 11: 30 a.m.  
Place: Kroger's Kentucky Derby Fest-a-Ville on the Waterfront  
Cost: Admission is 2008 Pegasus Pin  
Sponsor: Arison Insurance Services, Inc.

The Run for the Rose' is the Derby Festival's "most spirited" event, as area restaurant servers and corporate teams race around a ½-mile obstacle course while trying to balance six full glasses of wine. It's not an easy task and results in a lot of fun and laughter for participants and spectators alike. The winner is the contestant with the fastest time and the most wine left. A non-professional division is open to area businesses competing for corporate bragging rights.

Originally known as the "Downtown Derby Strutters" in 1979, the event was created as a way of involving downtown area restaurants in Festival activities. Since the beginning, waiters and waitresses have showcased their serving skills while jumping, skipping and winding through adventurous routes. Speed and balance are the keys, and participants can even drink their results after "weighing in." The Run for the Rose' has been held at Louisville Slugger Field since the 2000 Derby Festival.

### **Great Steamboat Race**

Date: Wednesday, April 30  
Time: 4:45 p.m.  
Place: Ohio River, from Second St. Bridge to 7-mile mark and back  
Cost: Tickets \$126 Belle of Louisville; free spectator viewing along river  
Sponsor: Owens Corning Basement Finishing Systems

The colorful and nostalgic Great Steamboat Race began in 1963 and is a one-of-a-kind event. Held annually on the Wednesday before the Derby, thousands of spectators line both shores of the Ohio River to watch two steamboats – the Belle of Louisville and the Delta Queen – race 14 miles upriver and back in quest of the "Golden Antlers" presented each year to the winning vessel. Both the Belle of Louisville and the Delta Queen were

added to the National Historic Register in 1990 and are two of only six authentic steamboats in operation.

The race is a delightful remembrance of the 1880s, when steamboats used to race each other to demonstrate their mettle to prospective clients. Families bring box lunches to the riverside, making for an afternoon of socializing and relaxing. The event attracts national press and local TV stations broadcast the race live. The Steamboat Race antlers originally belonged to the Belle. Now a symbol of riverboat supremacy, the antlers are proudly displayed for a year on the deck of the winning boat. They are presented to the winning captain on the wharf immediately following the race.

### **Republic Bank Derby Festival Pegasus Parade**

Date: Thursday, May 1  
Time: 5 p.m.  
Place: West on Broadway from Campbell to Ninth Street  
Cost: Bleacher tickets \$9; chair seating \$11; free viewing in other areas

Economic Impact: In excess of \$14 million  
Sponsor: Republic Bank & Trust Company

Produced in 1956 on a budget of \$640, the Pegasus Parade is the Derby Festival's oldest event. Held annually on the Thursday before the Kentucky Derby, the Pegasus Parade showcases the community at its best. With dogwoods and tulips in full bloom, the stage is set on downtown Louisville's main thoroughfare for a springtime pageant of magical floats, inflatables, marching bands, equestrian units and celebrities. The event annually attracts crowds in excess of 200,000 along the 1.7-mile route on Broadway.

Highlights over the years have included the appearance of a Duke and a General. Hollywood stars such as John Wayne, Michael Landon, Lorne Greene and William Shatner have served as Grand Marshals of the parade. Entertainers from Carol Channing and Liberace to Gladys Knight and Reba McEntire have graced the route. Hometown heroes Muhammad Ali, Col. Harland Sanders, Denny Crum and Rick Pitino have also been favorites. Perhaps the most crowning achievement was the moving inclusion of General Norman Schwarzkopf in his first public appearance in the U.S. at the conclusion of the Gulf War.

**Details & photos for these and the other KDF events can be found online at [www.kdf.org](http://www.kdf.org)**