

Dancing downtown: Good weather draws Street Dance crowd

By ERICA PENNINGTON Staff writer | Posted: Saturday, August 6, 2016 10:00 am

BELOIT — Stateline Area residents and visitors alike couldn't help but enjoy the beautiful weather and show off their moves in downtown Beloit on Friday night.

The Street Dance, which has been hosted by the Downtown Beloit Association for 23 years, acts as the organization's largest fundraiser and is always a not-to-miss night.

"On a nice night we will see 3,000 to 4,000 people come to the street dance," said Crystal Cribbs, Downtown Beloit Association promotions coordinator. "We love bringing people downtown."

Planning for the Street Dance is a nearly all-year-round process, Cribbs said. Many local businesses show their support through sponsorships and over 60 volunteers help to keep operations running smoothly before, during and after the dance. The event raises approximately \$20,000 on a good year, with the funds helping to support the Downtown Beloit Association's mission.

"We're all about business recruitment and retainment, as well as getting people to come downtown and check out the different stores," Cribbs said.

Friday night's event showed early signs of success, with hundreds of spectators already staking out spots before the opening band, Mister Big Stuff, even took the stage.

An eight-piece band based out of Rockford, Mister Big Stuff started the evening with a variety of up-beat songs. It wasn't long before the early crowd was up on its feet.

"The band (Mister Big Stuff) is making a comeback of sorts, and we had The Cold Sweat and the Brew City Horns here last here, so we knew they'd both do a great job," Cribbs said.

Cathy Bown, of Beloit, was one of the first dancers to take to the street. She encouraged her grandchildren, Macy Bown, 6, Camden Bown, 3, and Serene Zimmerman, 9, to join in the fun.

Bown said that after last year's Street Dance, Serene just couldn't wait to come back. This year the family made special plans for the grandkids to spend the night and make it a night out.

"This event is great because it brings in a lot of revenue (for the Downtown Beloit Association)," Bown



Dancing in the streets

(From left): Serene Zimmerman, 9, dances the night away with grandma Cathy Bown and cousin Maci Bown, 6, at the Downtown Beloit Association Street Dance in Beloit on Friday. Also in tow was Camden Bown, 3, who wasn't bashful at all about showing off his moves.

said. “Plus it’s going to wear these kids out and they’ll go to sleep tonight.”

Following Mister Big Stuff’s performance, The Cold Sweat and the Brew City Horns rounded out the night and kept the dancing lively until closing time.

“We came out because my son loves dancing,” said Kerrie Schmidt, of Orfordville. “Downtown Beloit is great and this has been a fun family night.”

While many in attendance were locals, visitors also stopped by the Street Dance to enjoy the music, tasty food and check out downtown businesses. Tracy and Ken Butkus, of Chicago, decided to get away from the city and enjoy a short trip to Beloit with daughter, Juniper, 1.

Tracy Butkus said the family planned to enjoy the Street Dance and then spend the night in town. Most of Saturday’s plans included enjoying the Stateline Area’s trails and going hiking.

“We had been through the area once and really liked it, so we thought this would be a good opportunity to get away,” she said.

Kaylin Carlson, of Rockford, decided that the Street Dance would be a good opportunity to explore downtown Beloit for the first time. With her on the short trek was son Isaac, 1, who was more than ready to dance until he dropped.

“He loves live music and I’m really glad that this is happening early enough so he can enjoy it and still be awake,” Carlson said with a laugh.

The Celebrate Downtown weekend continues today with the Farmers Market from 8 a.m. - 1 p.m. and sidewalk sales.