

HUNDREDS SIP WINE WHILE TOURING BELOIT

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Hillary Gavan/Beloit Daily News (From left): Phill Buzzell, Cindy King and Deb Buzzell clink glasses at the Spring Wine Walk on Saturday in downtown Beloit. The event brought 400 shoppers and sippers to the heart of the city.

BELOIT - The Spring Wine Walk is becoming finer with age.

Fermented in fun, the event attracted 400 people in a sold-out event Saturday afternoon.

Downtown Beloit Association Executive Director Shauna El-Amin and Promotions Committee member Danielle Clifton said it was the third time the popular event has been held and the association already is booking tickets for the upcoming fall event. The Spring Wine Walk featured 17 stops at local businesses serving up samples. Many of the strollers filled up their shopping bags along with their glasses as they become better acquainted with all Beloit has to offer.

For a ticket strollers were able to get up to 10 2-ounce samples of wine. Some of the walkers were donning feather boas, crocheted wine glass holders and other bling.

"People really get into the spirit," El-Amin said.

Many of the wine walkers had driven in from other communities, eager to get a dose of Beloit.

Deb Buzzell and her husband, Phill Buzzell, came from Portage, Wisconsin to visit Cindy and Richard King. The Buzzells had booked a room at the Ironworks Hotel and were planning a weekend of fun. Deb Buzzell's daughter, who sells Glass Roots Jewelry at Tin Dog Records, had designed the crew special wine glass necklaces for the occasion. The Buzzells said they love Beloit so much they come down about five times a year to take in live music, go to restaurants and catch up with friends.

Phill Buzzell said Beloit has changed a lot from when he first saw it 33 years ago while dating his wife.

His wife, Deb Buzzell, praised ABC Supply Co. founder Diane Hendricks for her part in transforming the downtown.

"Besties" and self-disclosed single gals Rhonda Rhead, aka "Rhondazzle" and Kiki Rush, "Kikilicious," said they had ventured up from the Rockford and Machesney Park area to hit their new hangout of Beloit. The two were at the wine walk for the first time, but weren't strangers to the many businesses of Beloit. They said they always come to Beloit to visit everything from Zen Sushi and Suds O'Hanahan's to the Farmers Market and Clara Bo & Gatsby Wine Bar.

Cheryl Hanley of Janesville was invited by her aunt Melissa Brinkman of Potosi, Wisconsin, after Brinkman got "pinged" with an alert on Facebook. Hanley said she was looking for some sparkling whites while her aunt was hoping for more red blends.

Cindy Mooney, of Janesville, brought her friend Bonnie Schaaf. The two were thrilled with the glasses supplied by the Downtown Beloit Association that they would get to keep. They said they wanted to try to taste all the varieties of wine.

"It's something fun to do. I like sweet whites," Mooney said.