



Wichita Festivals, Inc.  
1820 E. Douglas  
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## Media Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **THE WICHITA RIVER FESTIVAL® TO BE MARKETED AS RIVERFEST**

WICHITA, Kansas – Wichita Festivals, Inc. a non-profit corporation with the purpose of community celebration, will continue its 2006 Festival branding initiative of marketing the Festival as “Riverfest” vs. the name Wichita River Festival® developed in 1979.

“The Festival has continued to evolve and adapt as our City and World has changed. It’s important for the longevity and life of the Festival that we continue to keep raising the bar and finding new and exciting ways to attract Festival attendees. It’s not the same Festival that it was twenty years ago and we hope the new name helps showcase the fun and excitement of the event,” said Janet Wright, President/CEO of Wichita Festivals, Inc.

In 1970, Wichita celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. In honor of that birthday city leaders decided to host a centennial celebration that lasted all year long. The last day of the celebration was the Wichitennial River Festival and was held on July 18, 1970. The first festival of its kind that Wichita had seen, the one-day event was packed with family activities, entertainment, a bar-b-que, a bike parade, fishing derby, carnival and a finale of fireworks – much like we do today. Soon after, city leaders decided to form a permanent non-profit organization, Wichita Festivals, Inc., to be responsible for the Festival. In 1972, the first Wichitennial River Festival took place.

The Festival has seen many changes in its 35 years. In 1974, it was expanded to 10 days of fun and then went to nine days in 2003. The button price has also changed throughout the years. It was \$1.00 for the first 17 years, then in 1990 it was changed to

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\$2.00, \$3.00 in 2000 and in 2006 the price changed to \$5. The festival ambassador Admiral Windwagon Smith and the support group the Wichita Wagonmasters were developed in 1974. In 1979, the name of the event was changed to the Wichita River Festival.

What began as a one-day celebration with a couple thousand people attending, has turned into an annual event with over 300,000 in attendance. The community of Wichita embraces the Festival every year. Some make it a family tradition to watch the Capitol Federal Fireworks on closing night or cheer on their favorite antique bathtub as it races down the river. For nine days in May the Festival is the community's destination for food, entertainment and a wide range of activities. While events have changed since 1970, the overall goal of a community celebration that includes something for everyone is achieved year after year.

Creating an economic impact of approximately \$26 million in 2006, Riverfest annually attracts more than 300,000 visitors. The Festival has become one of the largest special events in Kansas and was recognized in 2006 as one of the top 100 events in the United States by the American Bus Association.

"Most attendees refer to the Festival as Riverfest, so the change for Festival goes to this new name won't be much of a transition at all," said Wright.

**2006 WFI Official Sponsors:** AirTran Airways, Bud Light, Coca-Cola, Conrady Western, Cricket Communications, Don Hattan Chevrolet, Fahnestock Heating, A/C and Electric, Foley Supply, Jajo, Inc., Metro Courier, Printing, Inc., Signs Now, VPM, Inc., Wichita Marriott Hotel and York International.

RiverfestXXXVI is May 11-19, 2007. For more information about Wichita Festivals, Inc. or Riverfest, please contact Susan Burchill, Director of Marketing and Public Relations at (316) 267-2817, ext. 25 or at [susan@wichitafestivals.com](mailto:susan@wichitafestivals.com).

Wichita Festivals, Inc. is a non-profit corporation with the purpose of creating diverse community celebration within the Wichita community. The primary event produced by Wichita Festivals, Inc. is Riverfest.

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