

Artisphere hits new highs in attendance, economic impact

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The 13th annual Artisphere festival, which took place in downtown Greenville May 12-14, was a record-breaker in terms of attendance and economic impact, organizers say.

The international arts festival had an economic impact of about \$6.6 million, up 4 percent over the 2016 event, and the esti-

mated attendance of 99,817 represents a 2-percent increase from last year.

This year's event was plagued by a bit of rain at the opening night concert, but things went well for the remainder of the weekend, said Kerry Murphy, Artisphere executive director.

"We're really excited about the results, despite what might have been a slow start on Fri-

day," Murphy said. "While it never rained until the Friday night concert, the Marc Broussard concert at the Peace Center amphitheater — I think we had to call it about 45 minutes early because of lightning and rain and everything — it just threatened rain all day. But I think that made for really fabulous crowds on Saturday and Sunday."

It wasn't just festival atten-

dance that grew in 2017; artists' sales also increased this year. Based on surveys from participating artists, total artist sales were up 10 percent over last year, totaling around \$1.2 million. And sales averaged about \$9,150 per artist, an 11-percent rise from 2016.

Feedback from artists was overwhelmingly positive, Mur-

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phy said. Eighty of the 135 artists replied to Artisphere's survey asking about their experience.

"So we were able to calculate what we felt were some pretty sold sales numbers," she said. "So that's just fantastic to see their numbers going up steadily year after year."

There are no plans to increase the size of the festival for next year. With 135 artists, juried from an application pool of more than 1,000, Artisphere seems to have



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The 2017 Artisphere festival drew record-breaking crowds.

hit the "sweet spot" that offers artistic variety while allowing each artist to generate a significant sales total, Murphy said.

"The feedback we get

from the artists is, they love the size of the show," she said.

The 2018 Artisphere festival is set for May 11-13. For more info, go to www.artisphere.org.