

Report by Joe Sumegi, Communications and Cultural Services Coordinator

RECOMMENDATION

That Council note the report regarding the 2011 Strathfield Spring Festival.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide Council with a review of the 2011 Strathfield Spring Festival.

REPORT

Council's largest annual event, the Strathfield Spring Festival was held over two days on September 10 and 11 at Strathfield Park.

The event was changed considerably in an attempt to revitalise the event, as the Spring Fair (as it was previously known) had become quite similar year-on-year.

The objectives of this year's Spring Festival were to –

- Be the leading “spring” event in the Inner West
- Position Strathfield as the “place to be”
- Attract not only residents, but also those who live outside the municipality to showcase the area

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

The Strathfield Spring Festival was marketed as the leading event in the Inner West. This message could be plausibly conveyed as the event featured a bona fide headline act, 2010 Australia's Got Talent winners Justice Crew. Pre-event promotion and marketing took place in the following forms –

Event branding

Council's communication team created a unique brand to support all Spring Festival marketing with a colourful event logo and theme. This branding helped make the Strathfield Spring Festival recognisable and fresh. The brand is designed to continue to be used for future Spring Festivals.

Online

For the first time, Council established an event website, www.strathfieldspringfestival.com.au, which was developed in-house. The website gave comprehensive coverage of all the event details and was updated regularly in the lead up to the festival weekend, announcing elements of the event as they were confirmed.

In addition, Facebook and Twitter accounts were established to promote the event. The Twitter page was particularly effective in promoting Justice Crew's appearance at both the festival and guerrilla performance at Strathfield Town Centre (see below) and engaging with the younger Justice Crew fan group, many of whom made specific trips to Strathfield to see Justice Crew.

The event was also listed on known event websites, including City of Sydney's "What's On" page, Timeout Sydney, Events NSW and The Sydney Magazine.

Print Media

The objective of the print advertising campaign was to reach all residents and the wider Strathfield community, and therefore a campaign was developed that included both English-language and ethnic newspapers. Advertisements appeared in the following publications –

- *Inner West Courier*
- *Cooks River Valley Times*
- *Bankstown Torch*
- *Auburn Review*
- *MX*
- *Top News*
- *Sydney Korean Herald*
- *Hoju Donga*
- *Daily Chinese Herald*
- *Chinese Community News*
- *Epoch Times*
- *Punjab Express*
- *Masala Newsline*

In addition to advertisements, a number of newspapers and publications ran editorial covering the event –

- *Inner West Courier*
- *Top News*
- *Sydney Korean Herald*
- *Daily Telegraph 'Best Weekend'*
- *Sydney Morning Herald – The Sydney Magazine*
- *Filipino Australian*
- *Ang Kalatas (Filipino)*
- *Sydney's Child*
- *Vie Lite Magazine (Chinese)*

There was also extensive coverage in the *Strathfield Scene* in the lead up to the festival, culminating in a Strathfield Spring Festival wrap in the September edition, which featured the official event program and map and was distributed to thousands during the festival on top of the usual distribution.

Flyers, posters, banners, letterbox drops

The entire Strathfield area was awash with Spring Festival flyers, posters and banners to create excitement around the event. Staff visited schools, community groups and businesses requesting to place posters in shop fronts and flyers at their premises. The best response was from Strathfield Plaza, which placed posters in all of its display modules throughout the centre.

Large outdoor banners were erected at the corner of Centenary Drive and Arthur Street, Strathfield Town Centre and three at Strathfield Park (Homebush Road, Chalmers Road and basketball courts).

A letterbox drop of 150,000 households was completed, extending from Ashfield to Auburn. This was done to promote the event not only to Strathfield residents, but also to residents within the region to encourage them to visit Strathfield.

Outdoor signage was used to line the entrances to Strathfield Park during the festival and provide a bright, colourful welcome to all who attended and catch the eye of passing traffic.

Radio

Community Service Announcements promoting the festival were professionally recorded and sent to every Sydney radio station across AM and FM bands. This proved to be a cost effective way of promoting the event via radio, with a strong response from radio stations.

A staff member was also interviewed on 2UE on the morning of the event to promote the day.

Preview 'Guerrilla' Performance

To generate pre-event hype, a preview event was organised on 1 September at Strathfield Town Centre to showcase performers that would feature at the Spring Festival.

The preview featured Australian Idol and X-Factor contestant Natalie Colavito and rapper Smooth. The finale of the preview was a "guerrilla performance" by Justice Crew, which saw the group enter Strathfield Town Centre separately and randomly appear and join the dance performance to the screams of fans and onlookers.

The preview was held on a Thursday afternoon and timed to coincide with school finishing and the Town Centre being filled with students. The preview was exclusively promoted through Twitter and Facebook, with audiences either those that came after seeing the social media updates or passersby.

The preview was a success, with Justice Crew themselves handing out Spring Festival flyers and encouraging the crowd to 'come to Strathfield' the following weekend.

EVENT

For the first time, the Spring Festival was held over two days. The Saturday afternoon/evening was dedicated to cultural activities, made up of mini-events - Chinese Kite Festival, Korean Lantern Festival and Bollywood Nights with a Bollywood outdoor movie and a huge fireworks show. These events were relatively successful as new components, although cool weather saw numbers drop off during the night time movie.

The Sunday was the more traditional fair, with live entertainment on three stages, stalls, food, rides and various activities. The below is an outline of the features of the day –

Entertainment

There were three stage areas at the event – Main Stage, Kidz World and the Martial Arts Stage as well as a number of amusement rides.

Main Stage - a strong six hour line-up, with Justice Crew's two 30 minute performances the headline act. Justice Crew were chosen due to their high-energy dance performance and core fan base of teenagers. Not only was this group accessible via social media, but it was also hoped that if teenagers attended the event, their parents would as well.

Other acts on the main stage included Japanese drumming ensemble TaikOz, Natalie Colavito, Smooth and a number of local dance acts. The main stage was extremely well attended throughout the day, obviously peaking during each of Justice Crew's performances.

Kidz World - a dedicated area of the event, with stage performances from 11am-3pm as well as kid's activities, including an animal farm, pony rides, face painting and craft activities. Again, this was very popular and well attended throughout the day.

Martial Arts Stage – 12 acts and over four hours of various martial arts performances ranging from Tai Chi to start the day to judo, kung fu, karate, hapkido and more captivated audiences.

Stalls

117 stalls were accepted for the festival. Stalls were predominantly merchandise or food. An indication of the success of any event is the level of trade experienced by the stallholders. The majority of stallholders provided positive feedback, with many requesting that they be contacted again for future Strathfield Council events.

Transport options/traffic management

In debriefs of previous Spring Fair events, traffic was identified as an issue. To minimise disruption, a number of solutions were implemented.

A shuttle bus service operated between Strathfield Town Centre/station and Strathfield Park every 20 minutes during the festival. This proved to be a popular service, with queues for the bus at Strathfield Town Centre throughout the day. A second bus will be considered for future Spring Festivals.

Australian Catholic University (ACU) allowed Council use of its car park on Sunday. A "park and ride" service was implemented to then transport those who opted to park at ACU via shuttle bus to Strathfield Park.

As well as being promoted on the event website, the park and ride service was promoted on three variable message signs (VMS) located throughout the area in the week leading up to the event. On the event day, the VMS was then used as directional signage indicating exactly where the parking was available.

In addition, brightly coloured directional signage was placed on telegraph poles in various high traffic locations throughout the municipality. Signs either directed drivers straight to the park or to the park and ride service.

Additional bike racks were made available at the park to encourage event goers to ride to Strathfield Park.

Sponsorship

This year's Spring Festival was well supported, with the following organisations sponsoring the event:

- Strathfield Plaza
- Nine Network
- Commonwealth Bank
- Top Media Group
- Inner West Courier

EVALUATION

Over 30,000 people were estimated to have attended the Spring Festival on the Sunday alone, a figure which more than doubles the estimate of the 2009 Spring Festival numbers (2010 event was washed out). This success can be attributed to –

- coordinated pre-event promotion
- strong event branding
- popular headline act
- quality and range of activities on offer throughout the festival

Feedback received about the event was largely positive. As mentioned earlier, the majority of stallholders traded well and indicated that they would like to be part of future Strathfield Council events.

An online survey was also carried out. Key results included –

- The atmosphere of the event was what survey respondents indicated as the most enjoyable aspect of the Spring Festival, followed by stalls, food selection and Justice Crew
- 93% of survey respondents were satisfied to very satisfied with the overall experience of the event
- Over 75% of survey respondents were satisfied with the overall organisation of the event
- 75% of survey respondents were very likely or quite likely to attend future Spring Festivals and over 60% likely to recommend the event to family and friends
- Some suggested improvements included increased seating throughout the event area, more frequent shuttle bus service, increased number of merchandise stalls and layout to ease congestion.

The above information will all be considered as part of the planning for next year's Spring Festival.

REFERRAL FROM OTHER DEPARTMENT

No referral was required.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Expenditure: \$116,493

Income: \$26,736

Net: \$89,757

Funding was provided in the current budget for this purpose as set out below:

Program	Approved Budget	Expenditure to Date
Communications and Cultural Services	\$979,700	\$399,101