



FRIDAY – SUNDAY
AUGUST 13-15, 2010

Event Planning Tips

Canal Splash! is a yearly celebration of the extraordinary history, culture, and recreational appeal of the New York State Canal System and the Erie Canalway Trail. The event is coordinated by the New York State Canal Corporation and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, in partnership with communities and organizations throughout the National Heritage Corridor.

Individual sites and communities plan their own events, which are promoted canal-wide by Canal Splash! organizers. This coordinated approach connects individual sites to the larger whole and enables event hosts to reach a larger audience than they might otherwise draw on their own.

Canal Splash! takes place the second weekend in August. Events must be registered by the end of May to be included in Canal Splash! brochures and publicity.

This guide is intended to help you improve the success of your local event.

Plan for Success

A wide range of activities and events take place during Canal Splash! Individual events and programs that have a direct connection to the canal are most successful and help to build the foundation for the entire Canal Splash! celebration. Refer to the *Suggested Activities* on page 3 for ideas.

What: What are the strengths and unique assets of your site in relation to the canal? What type of event is most likely to result in success, given your time, location, budget, and ability to invest in Canal Splash? What connections can you draw to the canal—either present or past—to enhance your event or program?

Who: Who do you want to attract to your event? e.g., children, seniors, local residents, tourists, “general public.” Defining your audience will help you focus your event.

When: What time of day and day of the weekend lends itself best to your event and the audience you are seeking to attract?

Where: Canalside locations are preferred for Canal Splash! events. Are there new places to hold an event that you might consider?

TIP ► As you plan for your event, assign someone the task of taking photographs to record and share your success. Photos are critical for future event promotion and for general promotion of the canal, trail, and sites in the National Heritage Corridor.

Factors Influencing Success

A number of factors influence event attendance and success:

Advanced Planning and Organization- Logistics, publicity, and event coordination play a key role in event success. Identify an event coordinator or planning team and assign tasks, especially for larger events, to aid coordination and communication.

Community Involvement and Publicity

- Invite community groups, such as seniors, schools, and youth organizations, to help guarantee participation, rather than relying solely on media coverage to attract attendees. Plan to publicize your event locally to compliment corridor-wide Canal Splash! publicity.
- Reach out to the media- press releases two weeks before and the day before or day of the event help to generate interest. Be sure to include that your event is part of Canal Splash!
- Place posters and flyers in shops and libraries.
- Update your website- many visitors check websites first for information. Be sure your event is easy to find online and includes directions. Also be sure that the official Canal Splash! website has up-to-date information as your event evolves.

Wayfinding signs- Sometimes it is easy to overlook simple things, like answering the question “How do I get there?” Use sign boards to direct people to your location from various points in town.

Weather- Some things you can't control. Decide whether to have a contingency plan for rain.

After the Event: Evaluation

You will receive a brief survey to help Canal Splash! organizers evaluate the overall success of Canal Splash! Please take the time to fill it out and return it to us. Accurate numbers are critical not only for evaluating success, but also for securing funds for and publicizing future events.

Suggested Activities

Recreation

- Bicycling tour on the Canalway Trail
- Birdwatching along the canal with an experienced guide
- Canal cruise
- Cardboard boat race
- Fifteen miles on the Erie Canal- community walk, run, or cycling event with prizes for individuals or teams completing 15 miles on the trail
- Kayak or canoe paddle
- Lock tour and informal talk with local lock operator
- Nature walk on the Canalway Trail or at a waterfront park or preserve
- Rowing demonstration

History/Heritage Activities

- Historical interpretive talks or walking tours
- Boat tours or cruises with interpretation on the canal
- Canal themed tours of historical sites/museums (consider the connection between your site and the canal for Canal Splash! activities)
- Games for kids- 1800s games or tournaments
- Erie Canal themed lectures presented by special guests
- Historical re-enactments
- Living history skills demonstrations

Music, Arts & Culture

- Art exhibits related to the waterway
- Art demonstrations or “plein air” classes that take place at a waterfront park
- Children’s performance and/or puppet theater
- Erie Canal themed music
- Ethnic dance performances
- Musical concert- folk, rock, and marching bands, string quartets, symphony, fiddle music
- Storytelling

Community Events and Festivals

- Barbecue lunch with local dignitaries
- Community picnic
- Fireworks
- Ice cream social
- Parades
- Town-wide heritage celebrations
- Craft fairs
- Sidewalk sales (local, canalside merchants)
- Special discounts/sales/coupons
- Wine & cheese tasting

Sharing Success! This guide was produced by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and is based on lessons learned and suggestions from canal communities that have participated in a variety of events, including the 2007 Grand Canal Journey of the Lois McClure and Canal Splash!