

MEMPHIS IN MAY ISSUES 2023 ANNUAL REPORT WITH RECORD FINANCIAL LOSS WHILE MOVING FORWARD WITH 2024 PLANS

October 3, 2023 – Memphis, TN. - Memphis in May International Festival released its 2023 Annual Report outlining financial results from this year's festival events after the much-anticipated return to the riverfront.

The return to Tom Lee Park was marred by difficulties including: obtaining a lease with the Memphis River Parks Partnership, problems with access to the park, restrictive use of essential park features, designs not meeting agreed-upon specifications, and a park with 40% less useable space. Despite those challenges, fans who attended the events celebrated their return to the riverfront, enjoying a new atmosphere of energy and excitement in the new park.

Still, attendance at the Beale Street Music Festival fell to its lowest level in over thirty years at 37,805, and attendance at the World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest dropped as well to 39,625. The Great American River Run remained popular attracting 2092 registered runners in 2023.

In addition to the attendance decline, astronomically elevated talent costs, plus ticket sales competition from big-name artists' concerts in the Memphis area during late 1st and early 2nd quarters of this year, the organization reports a record financial loss of \$3.48 million from the 2023 festival operations. The previous record loss was in 2022 when the festival was displaced during the renovation of Tom Lee Park. That was a loss of \$2.23 million.

The 2019 festival held pre-covid in Tom Lee Park saw record revenues including a sponsorship by social media giant Facebook, which conducted a national media campaign focused on the City of Memphis. The 2019 festival had an economic impact topping \$149 million dollars and generated over 4.6 million in local tax dollars for the City of Memphis.

On August 2, 2023, the not-for-profit Memphis in May International Festival received an invoice in the amount of \$1,425,366 from the Memphis River Parks Partnership (MRPP), the organization contracted by the City of Memphis to manage the city's riverfront parks. That invoice was received by MIM over five weeks later than stipulated in the park lease agreed to by MRPP. Suddenly on September 8, 2023, MRPP, filed a lawsuit against Memphis in May stemming from the invoice. While Memphis in May disputed the charges, nonpayment was never at issue.

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"We are assessing all options for 2024 and making some tough but necessary decisions," said James Holt, Memphis in May President & CEO. "Memphis in May is no stranger to rebounding from adversity, so we will do what we must. Announcements about the 2024 festival events, dates, and venues are forthcoming within the next seven to ten days."

"To a certain degree, we might have to reinvent ourselves a bit, but rest assured Memphis in May will continue to be an event that will make Memphians proud and will continue to attract fans from across the country and around the world. We're asking all civic and government leaders along with sponsors, participants, volunteers and attendees of Memphis in May to stand by us with your support and indulgence," said Al Gossett, 2024 Memphis in May Board Chairman.

Copies of the 2023 Annual Report are available at www.memphisinmay.org.

Memphis in May International Festival Inc. is recognized internationally as one of North America's premier civic celebrations. The organization has presented its annual springtime civic celebration for 46 years benefiting the citizens and the City of Memphis, attracting tourists from around the world as well as national and international media attention. Memphis in May is the recipient of 240 Pinnacle Awards for programming and creative excellence from the International Festival and Event Association.

About Memphis in May

Memphis in May is a 501(c)3 nonprofit community-based organization whose mission is to promote and celebrate Memphis' culture, foster economic growth, and enhance international awareness through education. Founded by racially diverse Memphians in 1977, racial equity and parity are embedded in the fiber and culture of Memphis in May, the official festival of the City of Memphis.

Recipient of 240 prestigious Pinnacle Awards from the International Festival and Events Association, it has been named to *Travel+Leisure's* international list of Festivals Worth Traveling For, and in 2018, Memphis topped CNN Travel's list of international destinations to visit in May because of Memphis in May events. Beale Street Music Festival was named by *Oprah Magazine* as one of "14 Festivals You Won't Want to Miss in 2020. *Condé Nast Traveler* named Memphis as one of the "23 Best Places to go in 2023" in part because of Memphis in May's return to the riverfront downtown.

For additional information, please visit www.memphisinmay.org.

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