

Musikfest Tally? Some Stores' Business Doubled

By MARC D. ALLAN
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Musikfest '84, which closed five days ago, helped reintroduce Bethlehem residents to the downtown, city merchants said this week.

"People told me," said Jeff Moser, manager of Moravian Book Shop, "We didn't know that this was all here. They will probably come down and shop again."

Similar comments were echoed by every merchant interviewed. Each reported an increase in sales from the nine-day music and

arts festival held Aug. 18-26.

Moser said business was "at least double." Joseph Rich of Ripper's Pub said business was "triple or better."

"What we got is exposure," said Paul Meilinger of Meilinger's Tabaccos and chairman of Downtown Bethlehem Again, the downtown merchants' organization. "A lot of people found us. They'd ask, 'How long has this shop been here?' That, we feel, is a real plus

"It didn't put oodles of money in our pockets," Meilinger said, explaining that

Etc., the card shop his wife, Mary, operates next door, did better business than the tobacco shop. "But we hope that people come downtown now that they've seen what there is."

Some DBA members did not benefit immediately from Musikfest. "This was not the type of crowd that was going to buy luggage, shoes, men's clothing or jewelry," Meilinger said. But "a lot of people walked the plaza in the evening" and saw what is available downtown, he added.

Richard Szulborski, spokesman for Tom

Wainwright's downtown businesses, said people who haven't been downtown in years became aware "of the beautiful downtown we have."

Citing his parents as an example, Szulborski said they were downtown "more during the week of Musikfest than the whole rest of the year."

The short-term effect on the Wainwright businesses — the mini-mall, Harlequin Gifts and the Antique Fire Museum — was more apparent on the second weekend of the festival, according to Szulborski.

"A lot of people didn't plan to come to shop," he said. "They planned to come for entertainment. But the second weekend, people bought souvenirs."

Szulborski said clerks at Harlequin Gifts described the second weekend as "similar to the shopping days before Christmas," traditionally the busiest shopping time.

Dan Perio, manager of Orr's of Bethlehem, said "a definite increase in business on the retail floor was noticed. And the restaurant business was just excellent."

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Downtown Merchants Pleased by Musikfest

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"We're hoping that these people will have found downtown Bethlehem again and will come back — not only for an event like this, but on a daily basis," Perio said, praising the job organizers Jeffrey Parks and Roland Kushner did in putting Musikfest together.

"There was so much enthusiasm and spirit in the air," he added.

Al Bartik of Bartik's Cheese Shop said many of his customers discovered that Bartik's is not just a cheese

shop. He said a customer in the shop Thursday told him that she came in to buy lunch because she found during Musikfest that sandwiches are available.

"The exposure," he said, "was priceless."

Rich said the festival "brought in a lot of people that were never in Ripper's Pub — and they loved it. And I'm getting these people back. Musikfest introduced people to the city of Bethlehem."

"A hundred people said to me, 'I didn't even know this place was here.' That week was fabulous, you couldn't believe it."

Rich said his one mistake was not applying for a license to sell liquor on Sundays during the event.

"You better believe," he said, "I'll have one next year."