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THE HARVEST FESTIVAL AT BETHEL WOODS HAS TREMENDOUS SUCCESS DURING 11TH SEASON

BETHEL, NY (October 23, 2009) – Thanks to the many sponsors, vendors, performers and community groups involved, the 11th annual Harvest Festival at Bethel Woods drew nearly 30,000 visitors over seven weekends beginning with the Wine Festival on August 30 and ending with the Rustic Home Craft Festival on October 11.

The Harvest Festival connects local growers and artisans with the community to provide an opportunity for shoppers to buy and support the local economy. Over 150 farm and craft vendors participated in the festival this season offering products from locally grown produce, 18 year aged balsamic vinegars, freshly baked breads and pies to hand-made jewelry, hand-crafted furniture, bowls, guitars and more.

“Many of our vendors have expressed that the opportunity to sell directly to the public at the Harvest Festival has been a critical support for them during this economy, said Denise Frangipane, Festival Manager. “This has been especially true for our area farmers who had challenges this season with the rain and blight issues. “

Special events with area partners such as the Calico Geese, Claryville Quilters, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Catskill Woodnet and the Sullivan Bicentennial Committee were a tremendous success. These events allowed guests to experience various aspects of Sullivan County and Catskill history, art and culture.

Next year, the festival will again run for seven Sundays, August 29 thru October 10.

The Harvest Festival is supported by the Gerry Foundation as well as other sponsors who share the same commitment to the community and regional economic development. Sponsors include A & J Hometown Oil, Inc., Catskill Regional Medical Center, Jeff Bank and M & M Auto Group. The VW bug used in the Children’s Area was graciously loaned by Brad Burnett and Robin Geiger of BRIM Recyclers, Inc.

Community is central to the Harvest Festival with local organizations and partners continuing to be a significant part of the event. This season 11 community partners participated in fundraising opportunities at the festival. Each weekend, the corn and hay mazes were run by a volunteer organization such as the Alzheimer’s Association, the Holiday Mountain Ski Patrol and area Girl Scout troops, participants raised over \$9,000, while also sharing information about their group and recruiting new volunteers.

Manon Fortier from the Sullivan County SPCA commented, “The crowd at the Harvest Festival is most generous; the shelter brought in about \$900 in donations at the Harvest Festival and all 12 puppies we brought to the Festival were adopted. Several other people went directly to the Rock Hill shelter from the Festival after talking to us and hearing that we had just the animal they were looking to adopt. For the past 3 years, the presence of the Sullivan County SPCA at the Harvest Festival has been fun and

rewarding. It has provided much needed community awareness, fundraising and the opportunity to expose our animals in need of loving homes.”

The Children's Area and Community Tent hosted art activities with The Museum at Bethel Woods, Arts and Crafts with Matt Sherman, and over 11 community groups. Activities included painting a VW bug, nature-based tie-dyes, a Janice Center music workshop, making drums out of plastic tubs, learning the art of origami, pumpkin decorating and more.

This year's Table Auction fundraiser, which featured handcrafted oak tables decorated by local artists, raised \$2,000 to support the Harvest Festival Children's Programs. The Duke Delvin table, painted by Lindsey Jardine garnered the highest bid. Additionally, the annual fan favorite "Gathering of the Scarecrows" competition was a huge success with "Duke the Scarecrow" by the Yaun Family of Liberty coming out on top.

At the Chili Day in October festival, the Monticello Fire Department walked away with the "Thunder 102 Choice" award, and tied with the staff of Bethel Woods for the most enthusiasm and spirit award. The "People's Choice" award went to the Sullivan County Sheriff's Department who will proudly display the coveted trophy until next year's competition.

The Harvest Festival wouldn't be possible without the tireless efforts of the more than 40 Bethel Woods and Daytop volunteers who provide a tremendous service as part of the Festival team.

For more information please visit www.BethelWoodsCenter.org.

About The Harvest Festival at Bethel Woods:

The Harvest Festival is one of several programs that reflect the commitment to community that serves as the fundamental mission of the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts. The festival reflects our mission to support sustainability and continued regional economic development through this annual commitment to provide a venue for our local farmers, artisans, community organizations and businesses. A visit to the Festival offers the opportunity for people to gather and form relationships in ways that are absent from traditional retail/buyer transactions. We connect local and regional growers and artisans with the community and provide an opportunity for shoppers to buy local and support a regional economy. The benefit of being able to interact with the hard working families who produce and harvest their food and the thrill of watching artisans create their wares keeps Festival goers coming back week after week; year after year. The grown and harvested food and crafted items are acts of personal inspiration, and the festival offers visitors the opportunity to learn more about this process and to better appreciate and understand its value.