



Community Impact **Beyond the Dollars: The Power of Connectivity** **Brat Fest – Tim Metcalfe**

The Alliant Energy Center connects people. In Madison, perhaps no other community event exemplifies the impact and benefit of connectivity more than Brat Fest.

“Brat Fest is about coming together as a community,” explains Tim Metcalfe, Brat Fest organizer and owner of Metcalfe’s Market. “It’s a chance to celebrate who we are. Brat Fest is about getting together with family and friends, celebrating our heritage with brats and kicking off the summer.”

35 years ago, Brat Fest began as a neighborhood appreciation event with about a hundred brats sold in the parking lot in front of Metcalfe’s Market. The crowds grew with each year and Tim Metcalfe says that about a dozen years ago he realized he needed to find another location for Brat Fest. He contacted the Alliant Energy Center and decided to move the event to Willow Island. The site provided ample parking and great connectivity to the beltline and city thoroughfares. He says it was a perfect location, but admits that relocating Brat Fest from its original west side home was a bit of a gamble.

“We hoped our neighbors would follow us,” Metcalfe says. “Bringing it to Willow Island centralized it and connected it to downtown. It also gave the opportunity for so many more neighborhoods to join us and enjoy it.”

More people enjoying Brat Fest means that more volunteers are needed, which in turn, raises more money for area nonprofits. That’s because more than 3,000 volunteers spend their weekend working at Brat Fest and earning money on behalf of more than 100 nonprofit organizations. To date, Brat Fest has raised more than \$1.9 million for local nonprofits. Metcalfe says the vast majority of that amount has been raised in the years since Brat Fest relocated to Alliant Energy Center’s Willow Island.

“A 501 (c) 3 can raise more money in a weekend than any bake sale. For many organizations, Brat Fest is their biggest fundraising event,” Metcalfe explains. “We all go to Brat Fest and enjoy meeting our neighbors. We enjoy the music and brats and we know the money spent goes to great causes that stay in our community.”

In 2018 alone, more than 134,000 brats were sold and approximately \$130,000 was distributed to more than 100 area nonprofit organizations. Metcalfe notes that the work done by those nonprofits “reaches deep into our community and touches families.”

Brat Fest will continue to call the Alliant Energy Center’s Willow Island home for years to come. Metcalfe says the beautiful venue is the perfect fit for connecting people from neighborhoods all around Madison. He applauds efforts to plan for Alliant Energy Center’s future growth and sustainability.

“It’s good to see the county reinvesting in the facility and understanding its importance as a central hub to the community,” Metcalfe says. “When discussing the future of the Alliant Energy Center, I urge the city and county to consider how much connectivity means to the community.”