

READINGTON TWP.

QuickChek remains title sponsor of balloon festival

By Craig Turpin

For Hunterdon County Democrat

For the 24th consecutive year, QuickChek is returning as title sponsor of the annual New Jersey Festival of Ballooning, according to a news release issued by the festival organizers.

The Whitehouse Station-based convenience market chain's sponsorship is the longest-running sponsorship of any festival in the United States, according to sponsorship analysis firm IEG. The balloon festival, according to its organizers, is the largest summertime hot air balloon and music festival in North America.

This year's festival takes place July 29-31 at Solberg Airport in Readington. A record 175,000 people attended last year's festival.

"This annual event has an amazing impact on Hunterdon County's tourism industry," said Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno. "It is not surprising that the festival has been repeatedly acknowledged as a Top 100 Festival in North America by the American Bus Association."

QuickChek has maximized its sponsorship of this

three-day event into a nine-month-long partnership, according to the release.

"The balloon festival is our number one branding event," said QuickChek Chief Executive Officer Dean Durling, whose family-owned company operates 143 locations. "It has proven to be a highly effective way to introduce consumers to our brand and deliver our message of providing restaurant-quality food and the best cup of coffee on the market at a great value, as well as our outstanding customer service. It truly is a showcase event for us."

Last summer the company launched its new in-store Q Cafe to festival attendees. It was paired with QuickChek's on-site 2,700-square-foot, air conditioned replica store.

"QuickChek is an excellent example of how a company continues to connect with its customers, attract new ones, and integrate all facets of its corporate mission," said festival executive producer Howard Freeman. "We share many of the same beliefs, including a sense of serving our communities, which have made this a true

partnership from the very beginning. Together we have been able to produce the greatest event of its kind in the world year after year."

According to the festival organizers, the event has an economic impact of \$42.7 million on the state's travel and tourism and local economies and has raised more than \$2.55 million for local charities, nonprofit organizations and children's hospitals since The Festival Group and QuickChek came together in 1993.

BY THE NUMBERS

175,000

People who attended last year's festival

\$42.7M

Festival's impact on state travel and tourism and local economies

\$2.55M

Money raised for local charities, nonprofit organizations and children's hospitals

