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NJ Festival Of Ballooning Canceled For 2020 Due To Coronavirus

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By Alexis Tarrazi, Patch

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READINGTON, NJ — Sad news for balloon lovers as the New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning is canceled for 2020 due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

This will be the first time since 1983 that the festival is canceled. The 38th edition of the annual three-day event at Solberg Airport in Readington is now scheduled for July 23 to 25 in 2021.

"After careful consideration, we have made the extremely difficult decision to suspend this year's efforts to hold the New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning. We are heartbroken for the thousands of people who were looking forward to this year's festival, one which brings our community and our state together every summer to celebrate the magic of ballooning," said Festival Executive Producer Howard Freeman. "We will now move ahead with planning next year's festival in its normal summertime slot and look forward to brighter skies ahead when our community and our balloonatic friends can safely be together. Rest assured we'll be back bigger and better in 2021."

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The festival is normally held each year in July and was already pushed back to October due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the outbreak, the festival's fate also came into question when long-time sponsor QuickChek decided to pull out. Freeman had to secure a new sponsor by Jan. 31 to ensure there is enough time to plan for the festival for this upcoming July. (See Related: NJ Festival Of Ballooning Could Be Canceled, Needs Sponsor)

Without a title sponsor, the festival was in jeopardy of not continuing in 2020. Freeman pushed back the deadline after he said he got a call on Jan. 28 from an agency representing a client. That client has now been revealed to be NJ Lottery. (See Related: Fate Of 2020 NJ Festival Of Ballooning Still Undecided)

The New Jersey Lottery inked a multi-year deal in February to sponsor the New Jersey Festival of Ballooning. This would've been the first year the NJ Lottery would have served as sponsors of the festival. The next festival will now be postponed until 2021.

"We are extremely proud of how New Jersey has come together to fight the COVID-19 virus, while serving as an example for the rest of the nation," said Freeman. "However, as Governor Murphy has only authorized mass gatherings of up to 500 people at this time, the reasonable and responsible thing to do is to come back bigger and better next year."

Those who have already purchased admission tickets, hot air balloon rides, Blue Sky Club Memberships, etc. for 2020 will still be able to redeem them at the 2021 festival.

On Tuesday, ticketholders will receive an email detailing the deferral/exchange/refund options.

For more information on the festival and the cancellation visit balloonfestival.com.