



CITYVISION MAGAZINE VOL.4 NO.2

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Although the snow flurries continue, in Spokane we are about ready to embark on our next season: Event Season. Spokaneites love a good get-together. Perhaps you've heard of a couple ... Hoopfest? Bloomsday? Ring a bell?

For those of you who haven't, Spokane Hoopfest is the largest 3-on-3 street basketball tournament in the world (as recognized by the *Guinness Book of World Records*); more than 7,000 teams competed in last year's 20th anniversary event. Bloomsday, meanwhile, boasts more than 50,000 runners and walkers completing a 12k course during the first Sunday in May.

We draw huge numbers of visitors to these events, filling hotel rooms, restaurants, and shops. Bloomsday organizers estimated that the race had a direct economic impact in Spokane of about \$14 million in 2010. The weekend-long Hoopfest proves an even larger economic driver, at about \$30 million in direct spending each year.

These cornerstone events are joined by many others, from the annual Lilac Festival Armed Forces Torchlight Parade to our Fourth of July festival to a relative newcomer, the cycling extravaganza SpokeFest. One at a time, each of these annual events adds to our community bottom line.

It's easy to see why the city works hand-in-hand with these events' producers, providing public safety services, garbage pickup, pre-event pothole repair, and more. We work to recoup our costs whenever possible. And we know that cities all over Washington have these same discussions about how to support their own unique gatherings.

For me, those discussions must include not just visitor numbers and spending, but also these events' impact on community identity and spirit. Last year, after completing the Bloomsday course, my husband and I headed to the home of Susie and Tom Havey. Susie was just back from her perennial cheering spot along Doodsday Hill. A shirt from each Bloomsday was displayed in the front yard, and out back was an assortment of folks comparing times and sharing stories from the day over lots of great food.

It's annual tradition for the Haveys and, of course, a tremendous shot in the arm for Spokane's civic pride. How do you put a number on that?



EACH OF THESE ANNUAL EVENTS ADDS TO OUR COMMUNITY BOTTOM LINE.

Nancy L. McLaughlin
Spokane Councilwoman

