

Memphis in Poland so successful, organizers plan to do it again

Aug 30, 2017, 12:01pm CDT

This summer, a former Memphis in May International Festival country honored the city with a festival of its own. Now organizers say it was so successful they plan to do it again next year.

During June, Memphis in Poland took place in Gdańsk and Sopot. The idea originated from Ryszard Schnepf, Poland's former ambassador to the United States and an honorary guest during Memphis in May 2015. But, the Polish-American Society of Memphis coordinated the festival, with support from the Memphis Convention and Visitor's Bureau (CVB) and the National Civil Rights Museum (NCRM).



COURTESY OF MEMPHIS IN POLAND

The event included several concerts with both Memphis and Polish musicians, a two-day barbecue festival, a virtual chess tournament between Memphis and Polish elementary schools and a NCRM exhibition.

Click the slideshow to view photos from Memphis in Poland 2017.

"We feel like it was quite successful," said Pawel Jankowski, vice president of the Polish-American Society of Memphis. "We definitely feel like there's room to make the festival larger, refreshing people's memory about Memphis and introduce new things."

According to figures from the Polish-American Society of Memphis, 4,500 people attended the concerts and an estimated 8,000 people saw the NCRM exhibition. However, the festival had an estimated total reach of 1.5 to 2 million people, due to Polish television coverage.

Next year, the society plans to add more Memphis musicians to the concerts, and incorporate both a crawfish boil and local Memphis beer.

"We're totally convinced it will pay off, business-wise, in the future," Jacek Dutkiewicz, president of the Polish-American Society of Memphis, said of the festival.

Dutkiewicz and Jankowski hope the festival will spark similar events by other country societies; the organization's members have already been approached by other groups seeking advice for their own "Memphis" type festivals.

Next year's Memphis in Poland festival is expected to take place between June and August.

"It exceeded all of our expectations," Dutkiewicz said of this year's event. "It exceeded everyone's expectations."

Elle Perry
Digital Producer
Memphis Business Journal

