

Charter Communications' connection to NCF and community

BY ERIN ANDERSON

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Paying that cable bill may seem just a little bit easier this month.

That is, if you're one of the over half a million people planning on spending this year's National Cherry Festival enjoying the sweet and soulful sounds of a blues fest line-up, singing along with the rock and roll of 1964: The Tribute, or watching the incredible feats of the air show performances as they soar high above the glimmering bay.

These are just some of the events made possible by the cooperative media sponsorship of Charter Communications.

Although they are the third largest cable and broadband



provider in the nation, operating in 40 states, Charter hardly runs like typical "big business."

Rather, the company has adopted the concept of corporate decentralization, which allows the local and regional offices the freedom to invest and participate in their own communities.

"It gives local groups like us the ability to tie in with, and promote, local events," said Pat Cline, Charter's North Area Marketing Manager.

Charter has been sponsoring musical events and other Cherry Festival entertainment since they became operational in the Grand Traverse region in 1999.

"We live here, we work here, we pay taxes here. We enjoy the same things the rest of the community does, and we want to give something back," Cline said of his northwest Michigan Charter team.

This year, all twenty performing arts events and concerts at the Open Space's Bay Side Entertainment Stage, along with the weekend air shows, the Grocers' Partnership Program and Trip Giveaway, and even the familiar red festival banners lining the streets of downtown Traverse City, will be made possible in part by Charter Communications.

In addition to sponsoring the events and programs themselves, Charter will also provide the funding to make these activities accessible to all of the festival's attendees. Every concert, as well as the air show, will be signed for the deaf and hearing impaired. Even if a particular event is not scheduled to be signed, the festival will try their utmost to provide an interpreter on an individual basis should anyone request the service. This is one of the contributions of which Charter is most proud, as prior to their support, there was no interpretation, and no way for hundreds of hearing impaired visitors to fully engage in a large number of festival experiences.

However, Charter's visibility won't be completely relegated

to sponsorship posters and placards.

Their Mobile Demo Vehicle will be parked at the Open Space for the duration of the festival. Attendees are welcome to come aboard, check out Charter digital cable, surf the net using their Pipeline high-speed connection and learn more about the products and services currently available in the Grand Traverse region. Pat Cline hopes that many festival participants will take advantage of this opportunity to experience what a real community-focused company like Charter can offer.

"We service the area the best we can," he said, "and we'd like to give back some of the benefits it gives us. A lot of companies wouldn't be as supportive as Charter has been in allowing us to do that."