



For Immediate Release: August 2, 2016

Contact:

Chyresse Wells, ESD | Chyresse.Wells@esd.ny.gov | (800) 260-7313

EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES SPIEDIE FEST BALLOON RALLY EXPO TO TAKE PLACE IN BINGHAMTON THIS WEEKEND

Festival Supported by Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council

Empire State Development (ESD) today encouraged residents and travelers to experience Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally Expo in Binghamton August 5 – 7, 2016. The three-day event features an all-star music lineup with headliners Rick Springfield and Martina McBride, as well as craft vendors, hundreds of antique cars, midway rides, food vendors, a Taste NY tent, family-friendly activities and more.

“Over the last 30 years the Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally Expo has become an economic driver supporting local businesses and boosting tourism in the Southern Tier region,” **said ESD President, CEO & Commissioner Howard Zemsky.** “I encourage everyone to visit this family-friendly event and enjoy local food and beverage this coming weekend in Binghamton.”

The Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally Expo began in the early 1980s with five hot air balloons, a local band and a Spiedie Cooking Contest. Today, as one of the region’s top tourist attractions, the event draws more than 100,000 visitors and generates more than \$8 million in economic impact.

Taking place at Otsiningo Park, the 2016 Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally Expo will feature:

- Live Concerts, with artists including Rick Springfield and Martina McBride;
- Over 40 Hot Air Balloons;
- Craft Fair featuring 200 Craft Vendors;
- Car Show featuring 300 Antique Cars;
- 30 Food Vendors;
- Midway rides and other family-friendly activities;

- Beer and Wine Garden;
- Spiedie Cooking Contest and Spiedie Eating Contest;
- A Taste NY Tent featuring New York State food and beverage products; and
- A 5K run on Sunday morning

“Every year, we look forward to working with local businesses to help build awareness of the great products the region has to offer. From New York-made food and craft beverage, to artisan crafts and goods offered at the Craft Fair and small businesses featured in the Business Expo, we’re putting the spotlight on Binghamton and the Southern Tier,” **said Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally Event Coordinator Dave Pessagno.** “We thank the State for supporting the 2016 Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally and encourage everyone to visit us this weekend in Binghamton!”

The Southern Tier Regional Economic Development Council (STREDC) identified the 2016 Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally Expo in Round V, as it aligns with the Southern Tier’s business development and tourism efforts by showcasing local business and boosting tourism in the region. The event was awarded a \$37,500 Market NY grant to support both a multimedia marketing plan and special events taking place throughout the weekend-long festival.

“Spiedies are an iconic part of this Upstate community, and the Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally remains a signature summer event for the Southern Tier,” **said Senator Fred Akshar.** “I’m excited to be helping judge this year’s Spiedie Cooking Contest and I hope everyone comes out to this fun, family-friendly event!”

Assemblyman Clifford W. Crouch (R-Bainbridge) said, “This is always a fun regional tradition that highlights tasteful local cuisine, businesses, tourism, activities, and of course the wide variety of hot air balloons for our families to enjoy. For those who are thinking about attending for the first time, it’s a great opportunity to experience what the Southern Tier has to offer.”

“The Spiedie Fest and Balloon Rally is one of the Southern Tier’s signature tourism events,” **said Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo.** “For over thirty years, thousands of local and out of town visitors have enjoyed spectacular balloon launches, entertainment, and our always popular spiedie sandwich. The addition of the Taste NY tent and the Beer and Wine garden have given rally goers even more to enjoy.”

“What started out as a small festival celebrating a Broome County delicacy, the spiedie, has turned into one of the top festivals in the Country,” **said County Executive Debbie Preston.** “This celebration is a part of our local heritage as it brings Broome County together. The Spiedie Fest truly is for the people of Broome County as well as the visitors that travel to our region to enjoy what our area has to offer.”

“The Spiedie Fest brings our community together while showcasing the best of Binghamton’s food and culture,” **said Binghamton Mayor Richard C. David.** “Each year, the crowds grow and interest builds from across New York State to celebrate the famous spiedie and see dozens of hot air balloons coast through our beautiful river valley. Our businesses also welcome the sizable economic boost from tourists and vendors alike.”

“The Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally is a beloved tradition in our region. Every year, we look forward to welcoming 100,000 visitors to the Binghamton area to support our local food and beverage vendors, and other businesses participating in the three-day festival,” **said Southern Tier Co-Chairs Dr. Harvey Stenger, President of Binghamton University, and Tom Tranter, President & CEO of Corning Enterprises.** “We look forward to another successful event and hope visitors, both in and out-of-state, take time to experience all that the Southern Tier Region has to offer.”

The 2016 Spiedie Fest & Balloon Rally guide and schedule events are available online at www.spiediefest.com. For parking information and directions to Otsiningo Park, visit: www.spiediefest.com/parking and www.spiediefest.com/travel-info. Parking for the event is available at Broome Community College (BCC).

The 2016 Spiedie Fest Balloon Rally Expo supports “Southern Tier Soaring,” the region’s comprehensive blueprint to generate economic growth and community development. Supporting business sectors, like the state’s growing tourism industry, is an important component of Southern Tier Soaring. The State has already invested more than \$3.1 billion in the region since 2012 to support the plan – attracting a talented workforce, growing businesses and creating new jobs across the region.

About Empire State Development

Empire State Development (ESD) is New York’s chief economic development agency (www.esd.ny.gov). The mission of ESD is to promote a vigorous and growing economy, encourage the creation of new job and economic opportunities, increase revenues to the State and its municipalities, and achieve stable and diversified local economies. Through the use of loans, grants, tax credits and other forms of financial assistance, ESD strives to enhance private business investment and growth to spur job creation and support prosperous communities across New York State. ESD is also the primary administrative agency overseeing Governor Cuomo’s Regional Economic Development Councils and the marketing of “I Love NY,” the State’s iconic tourism brand. For more information on Regional Councils and Empire State Development, visit www.nyworks.ny.gov and www.esd.ny.gov.

###

