

## Tips for Organizing a National Parks 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party

*Who is better at throwing a party than the tourism community?*



*Organizing a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party at a local national park can be a great way to showcase a community's special places and history, as well as draw visitors during time that is often not peak tourism. The actual birthday of the National Park Service is August 25, the date President Wilson signed into law the Organic Act of 1916. Nationally, events will be held throughout the month and a birthday party at a local site can be organized on any date in August.*

Here are some tips for organizing a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party:

- The party can be simple or elaborate, it's the message that makes it a compelling event. Buy a birthday cake, hang a banner, gather community and park leaders to offer remarks and pass out cake to all in attendance. Or make it a weekend long celebration with a festival. As Nike would say: Just do it – celebrate the parks.
- Invite elected officials. This is an opportunity to educate policymakers on how tourism promotion works and the economic importance of the parks to the area. 2016 is an election year and elected officials will be putting an emphasis on attending community events, and a 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party is a great community event.

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- Be collaborative. Lots of community groups are interested in supporting the parks in the Centennial year, they just need to be connected. Reach out to Friends of the park groups, the regional office of the National Parks Conservation Association, the local Best Western, REI store and Subaru dealership, as well as AAA offices. Last year, four Tennessee communities, Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, Sevierville and Sevier Country came together with great success to organize a 99<sup>th</sup> birthday party at the Great Mountains National Park Headquarters.
- Invite the press. August is traditionally a slow time for news, give local media outlets a fun, interesting story about their community.
- Produce a fact sheet on the economic impact of tourism and the national parks. (Posted in the Resources section of the toolkit are links the state by state tourism economic fact sheets and the NPS Visitor Spending Effects by State reports.)
- Get creative with location. The parks offer a terrific backdrop for a party but the location can also be an opportunity to expand how people see the parks in their community. For example, Amtrak and several regional trains offer service to national parks. Gather tourism, park, and community leaders one stop down and take the train into the park. It's a fun way to travel and shows how the parks, tourism, and transportation are interconnected.
- Take pictures and share widely on social media. Sharing photos from your event is another way to showcase the special people and places of the Southeast. Taking it a step further, set up a photo booth. Put up a Find Your Park Banner and take pictures of people with a sign that states the name of their park. Immediately sent them the photo so they can share on social media, and keep a copy to make a photo library of the party.
- Speak up for the parks. STS is a member of the National Parks Second Century Action Coalition, which has printed birthday cards that people can sign and send to their Member of Congress asking for stronger investments in the National Park System as it heads into its second century. If you would like to have an advocacy table at your party, let us know and we'll send you a stack of birthday cards.

*Let STS know when you schedule a Centennial event and we'll post to our calendar and share the details with our federal partners.*

**Send to: [Centennial event](#)**