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PRESS RELEASE

TUCSON *meet*  
YOURSELF  
*a folklife festival*

DOWNTOWN

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## **Do the Math: Tucson Meet Yourself Folklife Festival numbers weave impressive story of community engagement and economic impact**

**Tucson, AZ** - Tucson Meet Yourself has become such an integral part of the social and cultural landscape of Tucson and Pima County --- faithfully convening thousands of Tucsonans for 38 years to celebrate the traditional arts, food, and culture of the ethnic, folk, and occupational groups of Southern Arizona and Northern Mexico--- that it is easy to take for granted the larger impact and significance that spins off this endearing annual event.

To provide a more transparent and comprehensive picture of the value that the festival adds to the local economy and social fabric of Tucson and the region ---especially in a year when both the economy and the spirit of civility have taken serious blows in the Old Pueblo--- TMY's Executive Director Mia Hansen decided to take on the task of documenting by sheer numbers alone the scope of the festival and consequently, its reach and impact into the community.

Few Tucsonans realize that this is the largest attended community-based, cultural event in all of Southern Arizona: 100,000 people over three days. What happens inside the festival in terms of artists and folk communities represented makes TMY unique as well: it is a scholarship-supported and folklore-centered festival modeled after the Smithsonian's American Folklife Festival. The local version features 6 stages spread over 60 acres in the heart of downtown Tucson. It features 65 distinct ethnic food vendors and over 200 folk artists, chefs, storytellers, musicians, dancers, and other performers representing close to 50 different cultures from around the world.

In addition to the paid artists, approximately 3,000 community members participate by wearing traditional costumes, selling food, sharing information, and organizing the participation of other members of their not-for-profit community organizations and ethnic clubs. Those not affiliated with an organization, are ethnic entrepreneurs who see the benefit of sharing their cultural heritage through small business ventures. Each year these clubs and small businesses raise close to \$250,000 through sales at the festival; these monies are directly re-invested in the local economy and help strengthen the cultural continuity of these communities. Data extrapolated from a Tucson-Pima Arts Council impact study suggests that the total impact of TMY in the local economy over three days is around \$3.1 million.

"In the Tucson cultural ecology," said Hansen, "it is always astonishing to see how far every dollar raised goes in terms of value added." The total cost of producing TMY is approximately \$250,000 a year; that would be \$2.50 per person if the festival had a price of admission. Since the festival is free, TMY staff and Board raise money throughout the year to put on the event.