

Big Beers Educational Foundation: Looking to the Future

November 23, 2016

With the Vail Cascade Resort sale and rebranding announcement at the end of 2015, the future of the Big Beers, Belgians & Barleywines Festival was in doubt. Nearing the end of 2016, the sixteen year old event has restructured, found a new home, redesigned its website and communication strategy, and is looking ahead at clear, blue skies. How and why did this transformation take place?

“The fundamental mission of the Big Beers Festival is education,” says Bill Lodge, founder of the event. “We want people to learn about what is out there and to try new things. We also want to give back to our community and support the brewers who are living their dream.” That mission was at risk of ending, with no home and a business structure susceptible to legislative change.

The first step taken seemed clear: find out if the attendees and participants of the Big Beers, Belgians & Barleywines Festival would support change. If not, the path was clear; celebrate sixteen years of amazing people and events, and close down. If supported, many changes would be necessary in order to move forward.

Survey responses following the 2016 Big Beers Festival weekend were overwhelmingly unanimous: “Move it, change it, but please don’t end it!” was the consensus. So the work began. Where would be the new home? How should the event be positioned to be the most resilient going forward?

“Bill and I agreed that the event would have the best chance of moving forward successfully into the future if we created a non-profit organization that would be led by a Board of Directors,” explains Event Coordinator, Laura Lodge. In this manner the mission of the founders would continue beyond their immediate involvement in addition to providing the support of others knowledgeable in the industry. The non-profit status has the additional advantage of being a more secure business model to continue the event as it was originally conceived.

Thus the Big Beers Educational Foundation was created, a Colorado 501(c)(6), with the mission statement “To provide education for and about the brewing industry”. As a non-profit, the organization

no longer needs to partner with a non-profit to hold the event, as Big Beers has with the Vail Valley Charitable Fund for 16 years. In addition, the non-profit provides the option to create other events or directions within the scope of the mission statement.

The new location was finalized in the Spring of 2016, and the work of recreating the Big Beers Festival in Breckenridge began. “Many different locations were considered, with proximity to DIA, event space, and access to the mountain being primary issues,” explains Laura. “We really did some soul searching to define what the Big Beers experience really includes.” Once defined, the Town of Breckenridge and Beaver Run Resort went the extra mile to show that they are collectively a perfect fit, willing to partner for years ahead.

As any event planner will tell you, moving an event is challenging. Creating a permanent foundation and reintroducing the event on a more professional level are happening as well. A full website redesign including an online retail opportunity for event wearables and glassware can be seen at www.BigBeersFestival.com, all event communication has been transferred to the MailChimp platform, a dedicated PR/social media plan has been put into place, and the drive for more sponsorship to create a solid financial structure for the event and the Foundation has begun.

The bottom line for the Lodges? “The need for education about and within the beer industry, especially when combined with the ability to offer support to our community, are more important than just ‘here and now’. We want to continue and expand upon this mission in a way that will continue beyond us for years to come.”

For more information about the Big Beers, Belgians & Barleywines Festival, visit the new website at www.bigbeersfestival.com or contact Laura at Laura@bigbeersfestival.com.

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The Big Beers, Belgians & Barleywines Festival is the perfect combination for a Winter Wonderland getaway: A world-class beer festival in the Colorado Rocky Mountains! Meet renowned brewmasters and brewery owners, taste hundreds of big, Belgian style, and experimental beers, explore beer & food pairings, and learn from an impressive array of brewmasters and industry experts over an action-packed three day weekend. As a novice, an aficionado, or an advanced homebrewer, you can enjoy an

unprecedented opportunity to discuss beer with the amazing people who make it happen. Visit www.bigbeersfestival.com to learn more about this little festival in the mountains that the beer industry holds in such high esteem.

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Beaver Run Resort and Conference Center is located at the base of peak 9 at the Breckenridge Ski Resort. Beaver Run is a full service, year round resort featuring slope-side condominium style lodging, multiple on-site bars and restaurants as well the largest conference center in Breckenridge, Colorado. Visit <http://www.beaverrun.com/> for more information.

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The Breckenridge Tourism Office is the destination marketing organization for the Town of Breckenridge. Visit GoBreck.com for activity and event information or connect @GoBreck on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for the latest photos and updates.