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Cortez festival figures revised – way up

by Jim Hanson. Islander Reporter

Cortez knew it had another record in hand, it just didn't realize what a great height its Commercial Fishing Festival had reached.

At a meeting last week of the Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage's festival committee, co-chair Karen Bell brought exultation to the committee with the final figure: \$113,000 net profit with receipts in, bills paid.

That was nearly double the net from some earlier festivals, which were pleasing enough in themselves, clearing in the \$60,000s.

"It shows what a little sunshine and hard work can do," said Linda Molto, co-chair of the festival and in charge of the big arts section - which "did very well, too." She enthused over the numbers and quality of her volunteers: "They showed up when they said they would, they had ideas, did the work, they made the festival."

The weather was credited with bringing a record crowd Feb. 16-17, some 28,000 people. It didn't seem many more than usual at the time, because, the committee concluded, people came in a steady stream all day both days, where in past festivals they seemed to "clump up" at midday.

The record far outdid the \$98,000 realized at the initial festival devoted to the purchase of the 95 acres east of the historic fishing village which has become the FISH Preserve. It has been paid off by festivals since then, and now festivals finance purchase of lots in the Preserve still in private hands and other Preserve expenses.

A new note in this year's festival, which officials hope to forestall next year: Some entrepreneurs from outside the village apparently cased the neighborhood early for open parking spaces and rented the spaces to visitors during the festival.

A no-no from now on, Cortez vows.