PRESS RELEASE

ESSEX COUNTY FREEHOLDERS HOST THEIR
FIRST ANNUAL “ESSEX COUNTY CARIBBEAN FESTIVAL” IN NEWARK’S BRANCH BROOK PARK
ON SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2015

(Newark, NJ) – Essex County’s Branch Brook Park was alive with the rhythms and flavors of the Caribbean as over a thousand of revelers enjoyed the Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders’ first annual Caribbean Festival on Saturday, September 12, 2015.

Months of behind-the-scenes hard work by members of the Essex County Caribbean Festival Committee, under the leadership of Freeholder President Britnee N. Timberlake, came to fruition on an afternoon that was filled with music, food, and fun for the entire family. The Prudential Concert Grove section of Branch Brook Park displayed all of the pageantry associated with Caribbean Masqueraders as the event began with a traditional promenade of colorful costumes and headdresses dawned by program participants. Eventgoers engaged in the lively dance moves and steps in syncopation with the traditional rhythms of the islands. Throughout the day, the overcast skies were friendly and held back thunderstorms that were predicted, allowing the enthusiastic spectators to enjoy the high spirited entertainment acts that took place on the main stage.

Freeholder President Britnee Timberlake kicked-off the festivities by welcoming the crowd, as well as the line-up of top notch entertainers that included: Lyrikal, Rupee, Lady Genius, Young Devyn, Casey, Ricky Persaud, Jr., and the Crossroads and many more. Sponsoring dignitaries on-hand included Essex County Freeholder Board members: Freeholder Rufus Johnson, Freeholder Patricia Sebold, Freeholder Lebby Jones, Freeholder Wayne Richardson, Freeholder Cynthia Toro and Freeholder Rolando Bobadilla. Additionally, the County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., Sheriff Armando Fontoura and Essex County Democratic Committee Chairman LeRoy J. Jones, Jr., and wife Jaqueline Jones were present along with Congressman Donald Payne, Jr., who addressed the crowd. Although unable to attend, Freeholder Vice President Brendan W. Gill was present in spirit and in full support of the day’s event. The freeholder staff was acknowledged on stage, in addition to the event sponsors: Assemblyman Thomas P. Giblin, IBEW Local 1158, CWA Local 1039, Transunion Car Service, JNESO District Council 1 IUOE AFL-CIO, Covanta, Barnabas Health, CCB International, Pillar College, Exit Platinum Realty, The Jamaica Organization of New Jersey, The Caribbean American Coalition and Ambassador Phil and Tammy Murphy. The Essex County Parks Foundation and Essex County College were also instrumental in the Festival’s overall success.

The president stated, “This could not have been possible if it were not for my veteran colleague on the board, Freeholder Rufus Johnson who played a paramount role. He helped coordinate key individuals with experience to serve on the steering committee and was committed to celebrate the Caribbean culture from beginning to end.”
Freeholder Johnson stated, “It is a pleasure to celebrate and honor the contributions of the Caribbean community. Essex County spotlights diversity.” The committee was a collaborative effort consisting of a group of volunteers that included an array of professionals. The Board’s Essex County Caribbean Festival Committee included; Freeholders Bobadilla, Johnson, Jones and Richardson; Hector Carter, Elza Cival, Evette Etswick, Gail Bell, Dr. Gale E. Gibson, Michael Gray, Lionel Leach, Lady Ira (Lewis), Jean Maurice, Patrick Reid, Dominic Tamin, Harry Perryman, Jessica Johnson, Jackie Williams, Joanne Wright, Deborah Davis Ford, Debbie Marvel, Chris Taylor, Lillian Torres, Osner Charles and Bergson Leneus.

The Essex County Board of Chosen Freeholders’ first annual Caribbean Festival offered something for everyone and most importantly, celebrated the vibrant and diverse cultural heritage of the 30-nation Caribbean region. Furthermore, the Festival’s success will serve as a blueprint for future events of its type.

“Essex County residents of Caribbean origin have given so much to our County through music, food, industry and community spirit”, said Freeholder President Timberlake of East Orange, who initiated the event during her first year as a member and President of the Freeholder Board. “My colleagues and I are proud that the County of Essex will recognize Caribbean heritage for the first time while also providing all residents an opportunity to experience the culture, foster understanding and appreciation of our unique backgrounds, and what brings us together as one community.” She also paid tribute to the late great Bob Marley as she read the lyrics to his hit record, “War” and emphasized the line that says, peace will be fleeting “until the color of a man’s skin is no more significant than the color of his eyes.”

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