



2024 REPORT TO THE CAMBRIA AND SAN SIMEON TOURISM BOARDS

INTRODUCTION

Cambria Scarecrow Festival, Inc. (CSF) held its 16th annual festival during October 2024 culminating after nine months of preparation. CSF's team of 50 dedicated artistic and administrative volunteers created, refurbished, found sponsors for, installed and maintained almost 200 whimsical scarecrows that were displayed throughout Cambria and San Simeon's business districts. In addition, another 20 local businesses created and displayed their own scarecrow in front of their business.

In addition to the placement of individual scarecrows, CSF also produced five large displays. A hugely popular and interactive display called "*Fun n Games*" brought out the child in everyone. In San Simeon, visitors enjoyed the popular "*Scarecrow Academy*" display based on a popular Netflix series. Returning again was a popular display featuring local Cambria woodland animals enjoying a picnic, as well as a 'welcoming crow-mmittee' at the corner of Highway 1 and Cambria Drive. Lastly, there was a display of vividly colored 'baby dragons' created by local school-aged children.

At least 322 Cambria Scarecrow Festival attendees (42% of survey respondents) stayed in local lodging facilities. Of the 322, 40% stayed 2 nights; 27% stayed 3 nights and 16% stayed at least one night. While there were at least 6 bus tours that came through in October, CSF does not have the ability to capture the person-nights spent in Cambria or San Simeon hotels for these tours.



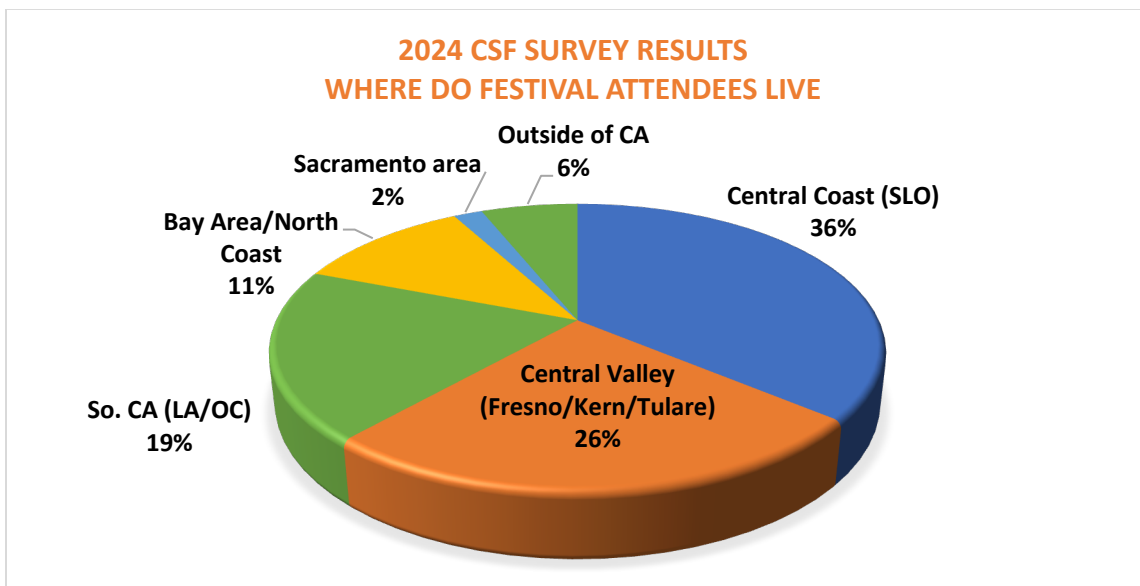


SURVEY OF CAMBRIA SCARECROW FESTIVAL ATTENDEES

CSF conducted its fifth annual online survey of festival attendees in 2024. Visitors were once again asked to complete the survey, accessed via QR code posted throughout the festival, with the opportunity to vote for favorite scarecrows and to win a free stay in Cambria.

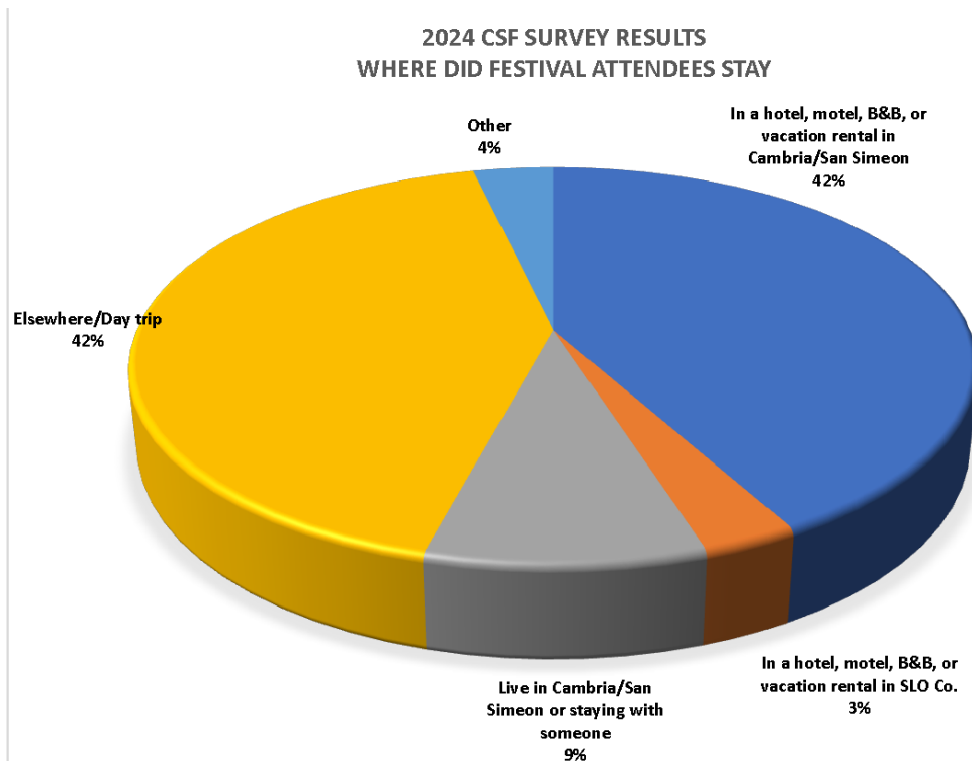
Approximately 768 people completed the 2024 Cambria Scarecrow Festival survey. This number is 27% less (1,050) than those taking the survey in 2023. The survey asked respondents their home zip codes; where and how many days they stayed while visiting the area; how they learned about the festival; and why they came. In 2024, another question was added that asked if they also visited local restaurants and retail shops. Respondents were invited to sign up for CSF's online newsletter and to receive future emails. Findings from the survey follow.

The Cambria Scarecrow Festival attracts a growing proportion of visitors from beyond San Luis Obispo County.



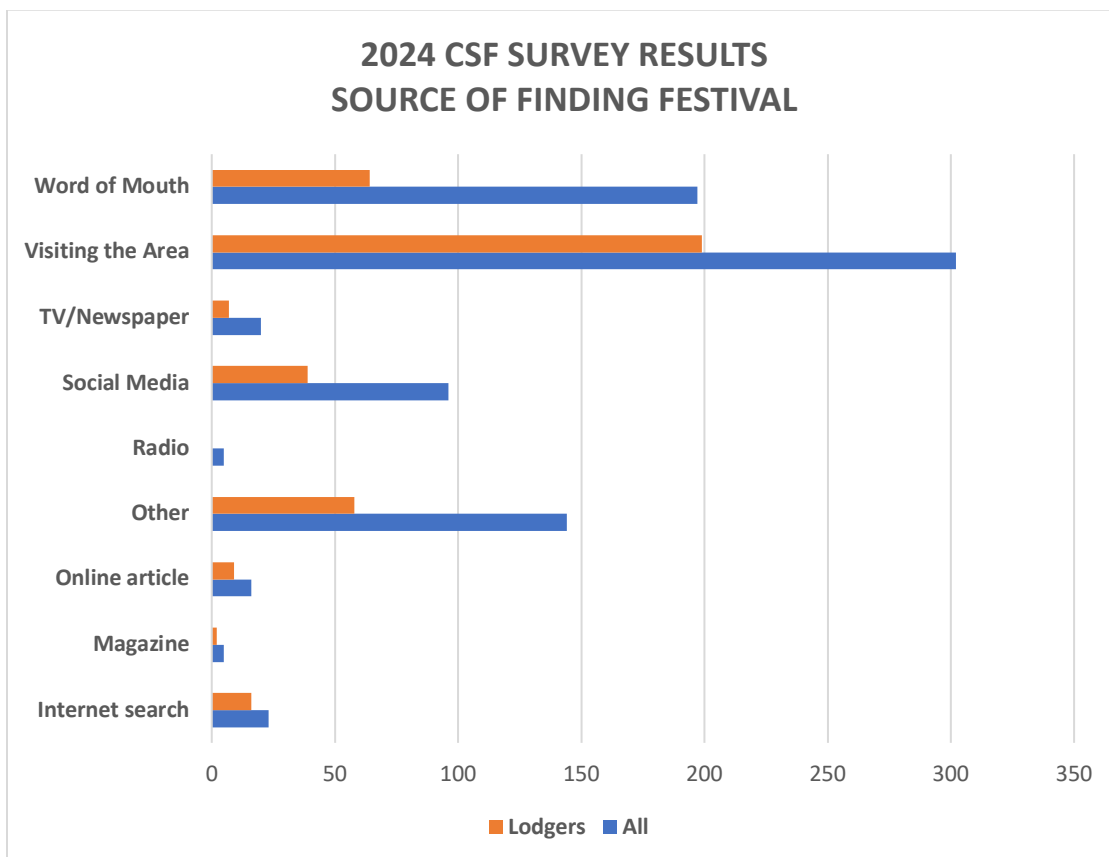
- 64% of survey respondents in 2024 indicated that they live outside San Luis Obispo County.
- 71% of the 2024 survey respondents that live outside San Luis Obispo County indicated that they came to Cambria and San Simeon to see the scarecrows.
- After San Luis Obispo County, the most often reported home locations of surveyed attendees in 2024 were Southern California (19%) and the Central Valley, primarily Fresno and Kern Counties (26%).
- 6% of 2024 festival survey respondents live in states other than California.
- 57% of the 2024 festival survey respondents from San Luis Obispo County indicated that they came to Cambria and San Simeon to see the scarecrows.

Almost half (42%) of those surveyed in 2024 stayed in local lodging facilities, and two-thirds of those lodging guests came to see the scarecrows.



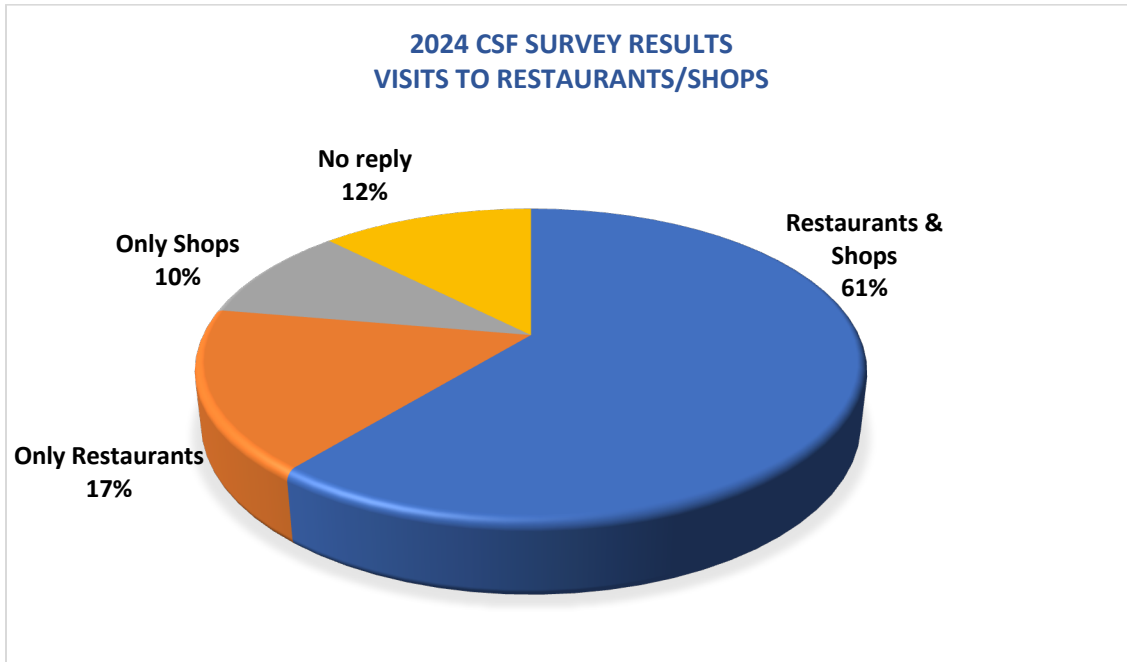
- 322 (42%) of survey respondents stayed in lodging facilities in Cambria or San Simeon during their visit to the scarecrow festival in 2024.
- 40% of those lodging local did so for 2 nights.
- An additional 24 (3%) of surveyed 2024 festival attendees stayed in lodging facilities beyond Cambria and San Simeon but within San Luis Obispo County.
- The surveyed Californians who stayed at local lodging facilities during the festival came from 36 of California's 58 counties.
- The largest proportions of festival attendees that lodged at local facilities came from the Central Valley (38%) and southern California (25%).

Approximately one-third of all survey respondents and half of those that stayed in local lodging facilities learned of the Cambria Scarecrow Festival through visits to the area.



- Survey respondents that stayed in local lodging were less likely than all survey respondents (16% versus 24%) to have heard about the festival by word of mouth.
- 12% of survey respondents, and 10% of respondents that stayed in local lodging heard of the festival through social media.

For the 2024 survey CSF asked a new question – “*what else did you visit while in Cambria or San Simeon*” to which 61% stated they went to both restaurants and shops.



Approximately one third of Cambria Scarecrow Festival attendees who took part in the online survey agreed to future contact.

- 238 (31%) of surveyed festival attendees in 2024 opted to receive the CSF newsletter and emails.
- 277 (36%) of survey respondents agreed to have their information shared. The file with email addresses has been sent to each tourism board separately.

MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

CSF promotes the Cambria Scarecrow Festival through advertising; direct mail/email marketing; signage; social media; the CSF website; media outreach; and public relations, including community service and outreach.

Cambria Scarecrow Festival implemented similar advertising and promotions strategies in 2024 as in the past. As an all-volunteer non-profit, CSF does not have a large marketing budget – nor

volunteers with marketing expertise; therefore, CSF's marketing efforts rely primarily on people going to the website, Facebook and Instagram pages.

Advertising

CSF engaged Archer & Hound Advertising to run Meta ads during October. As reported by Archer & Hound, the ads did very well garnering excellent results far exceeding 2023.

	2024	2023	% change
Impressions	497,000	300,000	66%
Clicks	17,823	10,407	71%
Post reactions	5,504	2,633	109%
Event responses	2,745	997	175%
Post shares	541	278	95%
Click through rate	3.59%	3.47%	3%

CSF ran a full page ad in the 2024 fall issue of *California 101 Travelers Guide*.

2,000 Cambria Scarecrow Festival rack cards were distributed at the Cambria Chamber of Commerce, the visitor center in Pismo Beach and at all local hotels and motels, as well as at a permanent scarecrow in front of Artifacts on Cambria's Main Street.

2,000 CSF refrigerator magnets were distributed to hotel and business donors prior to October to remind tourists to return for the festival.

Direct Mailing/Email Marketing

CSF expanded its direct email campaign to 1,939 active subscribers in 2024 – an increase of 33% over 2023. CSF sends a monthly newsletter, notices of events, requests for volunteers and other announcements via email.

Tour operators reached via direct mail continued to bring visitors to the area. CSF is aware of a minimum of six bus tours that visited Cambria and San Simeon during October. While unable to acquire information as to the number of night stays - CSF volunteers did serve as guides to two tour buses during their visit to the festival in 2024; one of which included a two-night stay in Cambria.



Signage

CSF placed signs promoting the festival in the week leading up to the 2024 festival and added directional signage during the festival. Approximately 19% of surveyed festival attendees described their visit to the Cambria Scarecrow Festival as they were “driving through and saw the signs or displays.”

Social Media

The survey results indicate 12% of the 2024 CSF survey respondents and 10% of respondents that stayed at Cambria and San Simeon lodging during the festival, learned of the event through social media.

In addition to paid advertising through Meta ads, CSF amplified the festival’s presence on social media during 2024 through increased Facebook and Instagram postings, including a Facebook event posted throughout October, shoutouts linking to local businesses and increased use of video and reel postings. CSF also increased the festival’s social media exposure through collaboration with tourism oriented social media users.

The Cambria Scarecrow Festival’s Facebook reach remains strong. While the October 2024 reach was down 28% (84,657) from 2023 (117,817) September showed a very strong reach of 192,516.

- The October reach (84,657) happened organically (not through paid ads).
- CSF’s Facebook followers increased 6.46% in one year, from 8,555 to 9,109.
- CSF’s Facebook audience is 85% women, and most of CSF’s followers are over 45.

CSF’s Instagram followers continue to grow each month with a total increase of 50% during 2024.

- CSF’s Instagram reach in October 2024 increased six-fold to 16,665 compared to 2,258 in 2023.
- Instagram followers went up significantly from 643 to 949 in 2024.
- The CSF Instagram audience is also overwhelmingly made up of women with most followers between 35 and 64 years old.

CSF used social media shoutouts for the highest tier of donors in its Friends program, posting about and linking to local businesses on both Facebook and Instagram. The first round of shoutouts was posted before the festival was underway and a second round included photos of the scarecrows at the donor businesses after installation.

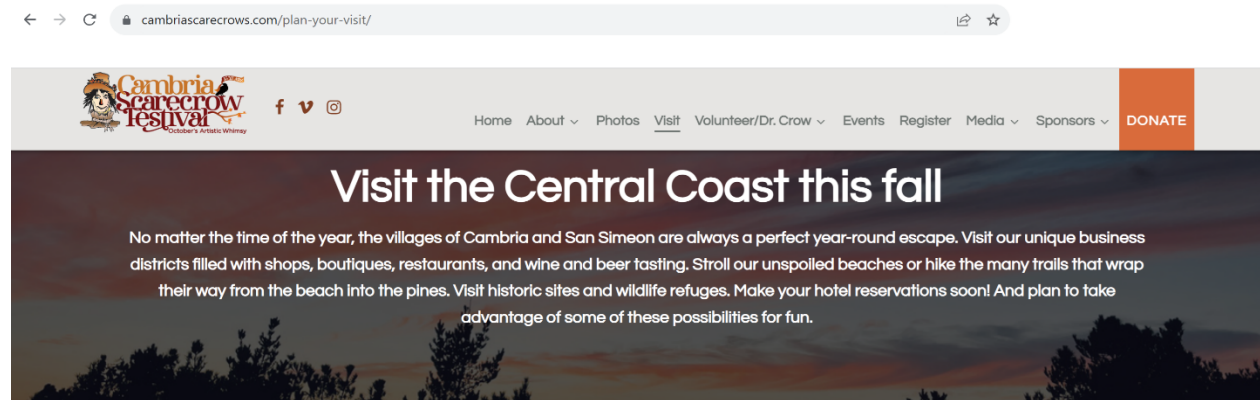
The area that really improved in 2024 was the posting of videos and reels. CSF had 208,979 views; 45% of those came from followers; and 55% came from non-followers. However, more followers watched the videos longer in all the ways FB tracks: seconds, minutes watched, and

total watch time breakdown. Also, total content interaction was down from last year, but interaction from CSF followers was higher than last year.

Instagram had a reach of 16,665 in 2024, up six-fold from 2,258 last year; much of that had to do with CSF creating and posting reels and stories often collaborating with other accounts. The collaboration gave CSF an additional reach of over 200,000+ due to their number of followers.

Cambria Scarecrow Festival Website

CSF's website was refreshed in 2023 and continues to receive good traffic in 2024 – most notably September through November. CSF provides year-round links to <https://visitcambriaca.com/>, <https://visitsansimeonca.com/>, area attraction websites and the Visit Cambria app. During the Festival, CSF posted a real-time interactive Google map that let visitors know where the scarecrows were placed. In addition, also posted was a simple one page map for those who prefer a non-digital format; both are very popular. Well liked with visitors - a "10 Tips to Enjoy the Scarecrows" page was also posted on our website, as well as a FAQ page. To garner more subscribers, CSF employs a pop-up on the website to encourage people to sign up for Cambria Scarecrow Festival emails.



Book Your Stay in Cambria

Book Your Stay in San Simeon



The number of visitors to the Cambria Scarecrow Festival website increased 26% in 2024 for a total of 18,707 visits.

Most people found the CSF website by searching for it on Google. The second largest group found it on their own – without using a search engine, followed by VisitCambriaCA.com that almost tripled in 2024 to 2,745 over last year (997).

Media Coverage

CSF sends press releases about the Cambria Scarecrow Festival and associated events (such as scarecrow-making workshops and the end-of-festival party) throughout the year. Media exposure during 2024 included the following print, online, and television coverage.

In August 2024 CSF submitted information on CSF events for publication on the following online “events” page:

- New Times
- KSBY
- KCBX
- San Luis Obispo Tribune

August 16, 2024, KSBY TV came to CSF’s “Make it in a Day” workshop and featured the workshop in their morning and evening broadcast and on the KSBY website.

September 19, *New Times* ran an article about how the festival supports the community.

On September 26, Sophia Villalba of KSBY TV came to Cambria and spent quite a bit of time walking around to watch the setup on the first day of the festival. The coverage ran on the morning and evening broadcast and on the KSBY website.

October 2, the *San Luis Obispo Tribune* ran an article about the 2024 festival.

October 3, @cambriaca.org featured the festival in an online article.

October 11, Sophia Villalba (KSBY TV) did a follow up to showcase how the festival is a boost to local businesses. The coverage ran on the morning and evening broadcast and on the KSBY website.

@sanluisobispoguide (34.5K Instagram followers) featured the festival in its October newsletter.



Photo: Mark Dektor



Photo: Mark Dektor



Photo: Mark Dektor

Public Relations and Community Service

Since its founding in 2009, CSF has focused on promoting tourism in Cambria and San Simeon through its annual scarecrow festival every October. The organization, however, also provides community services through its scarecrow-making workshops, collaborations with other community organizations, and other activities throughout the year.

As an entirely volunteer organization, CSF relies on community members for all activities needed to plan, promote, and execute a successful annual festival. Approximately 50 volunteers participated in making scarecrows and otherwise preparing for the Cambria Scarecrow Festival in 2024. CSF greatly appreciates the volunteer time and effort without which the festival would not be possible. The organization also recognizes that its workshops serve as a community arts program, providing participants with materials, instruction, and space to be creative, to learn about various sculpture techniques, and to socialize with other volunteers.

As in previous years, CSF hosted “Dr. Crow,” an on-going workshop where volunteers work on scarecrows Monday through Friday from May to September. Most of the CSF scarecrows are created at Dr. Crow every year. This year, 50 Dr. Crow volunteers created and refreshed approximately 200 scarecrows, including, among others, those that populated the new, crowd-pleasing “*Fun and Games*,” woodland creatures having a “*Picnic-Cambria Style*,” a “*Welcoming Crow-mmittee*” display, and “*Cambria Scarecrow Academy*” (inspired by a Netflix series) anchoring the festival in Cambria and San Simeon, respectively.

CSF also holds special workshops throughout its scarecrow-making season. This year’s special workshops included:

- Power Tool Instruction
- “Make it in a Day” scarecrow creation
- “Lunch and Learn” seminars on various techniques (i.e. painting on burlap)

- Children’s workshop held in collaboration with the Cambria Center for the Arts (CCA) Youth Program that resulted in the placement of 18 vividly colored ‘baby dragon’ scarecrows on a popular street bridge in Cambria



Photo: Mark Dektor



Through its Friends donor program and collaborations throughout the year, CSF reaches out to local businesses. In 2022, CSF began integrating its Friends and scarecrow rental programs into a single approach to financially support the festival. This approach and persistent outreach have continued to result in support from community businesses; 56 local businesses sponsored scarecrows during the 2024 festival, slightly under from 2023 (65). However, it isn’t only about financial donations – it is about bringing tourists to the area by swathing the town with scarecrows by encouraging local businesses to create and display their own scarecrows.

For the second year, CSF collaborated with CCA to present free screenings of the documentary “Something to Crow About” twice a day on Tuesday through Sunday throughout October. The film, produced by a local filmmaker, documents the volunteerism, community spirit, and history of the Cambria Scarecrow Festival.

CSF collaborated with the Cambria Chamber of Commerce to host a third annual Open House/Chamber Mixer on March 19, 2024, attracting both business and local attendees to come learn about the festival and its value to the community.

During the last weekend of the festival, CSF put on the 2024 Salute to the Scarecrows event at the Cambria Nursery grounds. This wrap-up event and fundraiser featured food and drink offerings (completely donated) from 17 local restaurants and wineries. Although CSF set a goal to sell 150 tickets, only 121 were sold. The deficit was attributed to another fundraising event that was held at a popular venue on the same evening.

In addition to its community service as a volunteer community arts organization, CSF keeps sandbags readily available to the Cambria Fire Department in case of flooding. CSF also provides scholarships to local high school students. This year, eight scholarships totaling \$4,000 were given to graduating seniors at the local Coast Union High School.

CSF took part in the annual Pinedorado parade. The organization also continued its international collaboration with its sister scarecrow festival, the Oku Harima Scarecrow Village, in Japan.

FINANCIAL REPORT

In its 2024 request for funding, CSF budgeted annual income at \$54,250, including a \$15,000 grant from the Cambria Tourism Board and \$4,500 from the San Simeon Tourism Alliance. Annual expenses for 2024 were budgeted at \$51,925, that included \$24,525 in tourism board grant eligible expenses.

CSF income fell just short (99.44%) of meeting its revenue goal. While income from the Friends rental program for local businesses came in 8% over budget, CSF failed to sell the necessary number of tickets for the annual fundraiser, and therefore, did not meet the 2024 budget. CSF put in a lot of effort to sell tickets, but there was another local fundraiser event in the community that pulled ticket sales away from this event. As this was the one and only fundraiser, and late in the season, it was impossible to make up the loss at years' end. CSF 2024 actual expenses exceeded the projected by 3.34% primarily due to marketing and printing expenses, which is critical to attracting visitors. It is hoped the expenditures in this area will see results in continued visitors to the festival for years to come. Although the resulting annual net income of \$286 is lower than budgeted, CSF remains financially sound.

A report of CSF's 2024 budget and actual income and expenses is included in this document. Highlighted categories show the expenses for which the funds from the tourism boards were used.

LOOKING AHEAD

Cambria Scarecrow Festival closed 2024 with another successful event for the communities of Cambria and San Simeon. The 2024 festival marked another year of celebrating whimsical characters, with the primary intent of bringing tourists to this community. This year's festival

resulted in a leveling out period. As a completely volunteer-based non-profit, it is thought 175-200 is the right number of scarecrows for CSF – both in terms of placement in the business communities, as well as manageability based on the current number of active volunteers. In terms of displays which attract the highest number of visitors, CSF will continue to create one new large display each year while rotating the previous years' displays to other areas of town. A good example of this was one of the large displays last year, which was broken into vignettes and placed along Moonstone Beach Drive. In the past, this area has not had a lot of scarecrow placement.

CSF thanks the Cambria Tourism Board and the San Simeon Tourism Alliance for their generous support of the 2024 Cambria Scarecrow Festival and looks forward to a continued partnership with both boards in the future.

Cambria Scarecrow Festival, Inc.						
2024 Budget and Actual Income and Expenses Comparison *						
		2024	2024			
Income		Budget	Actual	+/- Budget	Variance	
43312	Booklet Royalties	\$ -	\$ 4.99	\$ 4.99		
43400	Direct Public Support					
43420	Grant - CTB	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ -	100.00%	
43421	Grant - SSTA	\$ 4,500.00	\$ 4,500.00	\$ -	100.00%	
43422	Grant - SLO County Supervisors	\$ 1,500.00	\$ 1,500.00	\$ -	100.00%	
43422	Friends of Scarecrow	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 21,679.00	\$ 1,679.00	108.40%	
43500	Special Events - Fundraisers					
43510	Fund Raising Events	\$ 11,250.00	\$ 9,829.72	\$ (1,420.28)	87.38%	
43510.1	Raffle Income	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,320.00	\$ (680.00)	66.00%	
45030	Interest	\$ -	\$ 4.62	\$ 4.62		
46430	Misc. Donations	\$ -	\$ 108.37	\$ 108.37		
Total Income		\$ 54,250.00	\$ 53,946.70	\$ (303.30)	99.44%	
Expenses						
52200	Scarecrow Expenses					
52205	Creative Workshop	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 5,400.00	\$ -	100.00%	
52210	Studio Space (5)	\$ 6,600.00	\$ 6,600.00	\$ -	100.00%	
52213	Trash Hauling	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ (500.00)	0.00%	
52215	Utilities - All	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 1,952.92	\$ 352.92	122.06%	
52280	Set Up/Take Down	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,235.82	\$ 235.82	104.72%	
52300	Events/Fundraising Expenses					
52301	Fund Raising Events	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 1,698.79	\$ (1,301.21)	56.63%	
52301.1	Raffle Expense	\$ 200.00	\$ 133.01	\$ (66.99)	66.51%	
52400	Other Events Expense					
52401	Open House/Chamber Mixer	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ (500.00)	0.00%	
52425	Board meeting/Off Site Events	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 552.34	\$ (1,147.66)	32.49%	
54000	Marketing					
54010	Publicity/Marketing	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 7,244.07	\$ 2,244.07	144.88%	
54011	Paid Advertising	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,896.45	\$ 896.45	189.65%	
54020	Website	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,725.34	\$ (274.66)	86.27%	
54030	Social Media	\$ 600.00	\$ 499.57	\$ (100.43)	83.26%	
54040	Photography	\$ 600.00	\$ 600.00	\$ -	100.00%	
54050	Printing	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,627.27	\$ 627.27	162.73%	
54055	Electronic Mailing/On Line Services	\$ 575.00	\$ 579.00	\$ 4.00	100.70%	
54060	Banners/Flags	\$ 750.00	\$ -	\$ (750.00)		
54090	Miscellaneous Fees	\$ -	\$ 24.16	\$ 24.16		
55000	General & Administrative					
55030	Postage, Mailing Service	\$ 300.00	\$ 470.63	\$ 170.63	156.88%	
55062	Memberships- (Chamber/CAA)	\$ 150.00	\$ 115.00	\$ (35.00)	76.67%	
55065	Transaction Fee	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,065.23	\$ 565.23	213.05%	
55070	Office Supplies	\$ 200.00	\$ 1,433.11	\$ 1,233.11	716.56%	
55090	Accountant	\$ 750.00	\$ 825.00	\$ 75.00	110.00%	
55095	Insurance - All	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,065.00	\$ 65.00	103.25%	
55098	Taxes - State/Federal	\$ -	\$ 80.00	\$ 80.00		
55100	Donations/Gifts					
55110	Community/Scholarships	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 4,000.00	\$ -	100.00%	
55120	Friend Incentives	\$ 500.00	\$ 182.43	\$ (317.57)	36.49%	
55200	Scarecrow Creation Expense					
55210	Scarecrow Creation/Rehab	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 6,714.29	\$ 214.29	103.30%	
62840	Equipment rental/purchase	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 940.98	\$ (59.02)	94.10%	
Total Expenses		\$ 51,925.00	\$ 53,660.41	\$ 1,735.41	103.34%	
Net Income		\$ 2,325.00	\$ 286.29	\$ (2,038.71)	87.69%	
Grant Income - CTB and SSTA		\$ 19,500.00	\$ 19,500.00	\$ -	100.00%	
Grant Expenses - CTB and SSTA		\$ 24,525.00	\$ 26,328.40	\$ 1,803.40	107.35%	
* Income & Expenses as of December 15, 2024						