

To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors



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Watermelon Promotion Cools Off Rehoboth Beach Boardwalk Wednesday for 5th Year

Dover-The Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) in cooperation with the Mar-Del Watermelon Association will be on the boardwalk in Rehoboth Beach this Wednesday, August 4 handing out complimentary slices of red, ripe, juicy watermelon.

With the help of a few growers and the DDA, the 5th Annual Boardwalk event will once again promote the National Queen Tour. National Watermelon Queen Jessica Southard will be joined in Rehoboth by Mar-Del Watermelon Queen Parris Travers, handing out slices of watermelon from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The National Watermelon Queen, 20-year-old Jessica Southard of Bronson, Florida, was crowned on February 20 in Dallas, Texas following a three-day competition. Since then, Jessica has been traveling throughout the U.S. and Canada promoting the watermelon industry and making guest appearances. Jessica is currently attending the University of Florida, majoring in Agricultural Communication and Leadership development.

The Mar-Del Watermelon Queen, 19-year-old Parris Travers of Woolford, Maryland is currently attending Salisbury University and wants to become a teacher in Early Childhood Education. Parris believes that as the Public Relations representative for the Mar-Del Watermelon Association she will work hard to educate the community on the importance of eating locally grown watermelons and their nutritional benefits.

“Watermelons are a very important crop for Delaware’s economy,” said Delaware Agriculture Secretary Ed Kee. “With over 3,000 acres, the farmers who produce this crop generate millions of dollars of economic activity, much of which stays in Delaware. Watermelons also give Delmarva a claim to fame. Delmarva watermelon producers grow and ship this healthy and nutritious vegetable to millions of consumers throughout the eastern United States. There is nothing finer than a sweet, juicy, vine-ripened watermelon on a summer day.”

“Delaware and Maryland watermelon quality has been exceptional this year due to the dry and hot summer,” said Mark Collins, President of the Mar-Del Watermelon Association. “We want to remind consumers that watermelon is not only a fun summer-time treat but practically a multivitamin in itself (it has: no fat, no cholesterol, is 95% water, is very high in potassium and only has 45 calories per 5 oz serving). We encourage consumers to buy local, nutritious Mar-Delicious watermelons!”

According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service in 2009, Maryland and Delaware farmers together harvested 157 million pounds of watermelons with a farm gate value of \$17.9 million from 4,600 acres.