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HOME/OPINION

One Spark signals city can be center for innovation and start-ups

Fri, Apr 18, 2014 @ 3:50 pm | updated Sat, Apr 19, 2014 @ 3:46 pm

2014 ONE SPARK COVERAGE

- Jacksonville's One Spark Festival gaining national media attention, Peter Rummell making rounds
- JaxChamber looking to turn One Spark momentum into business development
- One Spark signals city can be center for innovation and start-ups
- What's next for One Spark? Organizers assess crowdfunding festival's future
- Complete list of One Spark winners
- One Spark partners with organizations to help nonprofit creators
- One Spark 2014 doubles turnout from last year; 260,000 attend five-day festival
- One Spark finale brings crowds, winners in hunt for supporters
- One Spark Winners!
- Winners named in One Spark crowdfunding vote
- And the One Spark winners are ...
- At One Spark, CEO puts a name to inspiration
- One Spark finalists are announced; attendance soars on Saturday
- Five must-see One Spark exhibits that caught our attention Saturday
- Downtown party carries on after dark, but will it continue after One Spark?



Visit our **One Spark section** for slideshows and additional coverage. #OneSparkTU on Twitter.



Editor's Note: #IgniteMedia is a team of University of North Florida students journalists devoted to One Spark coverage. Follow them on Twitter at @IgniteMediaJax, #IgniteMedia or on the

The ambitions for One Spark go far beyond drawing 260,000 people to a downtown festival.

Its core purpose is to turn Jacksonville into a recognized venue for creators and entrepreneurs, provide the supporting infrastructure to help them grow their business or enterprise and surround them with a community of other imaginative and creative people.

That means bringing out the best and often undiscovered creators in this region.

It also means attracting others from far and wide to come here and compete for attention, prize money and in some cases venture capital.

Having doubled attendance over its first year and as One Spark attracts growing global attention, its founders are now considering how best to move forward, expand and build upon what feels like remarkable success.

Its potential for Jacksonville is breath-taking although not clearly defined.

PARTY WITH A PURPOSE

As a festival, One Spark was one of the best around here in a long time.

Drawing what public safety officials estimated to be more than a quarter of a million people to downtown over five days is remarkable.

The food and entertainment were diverse and superb.

It was a pleasant environment in which to spend a few hours or parts of two or three days.

But One Spark was much more than a festival.



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OPINION

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web at ignitemediajax.com.

In what was called a "party with a purpose," the entries included a rich variety of science and

technology projects, new or developing products, artists and advocates

One key purpose was to allow creators, start-ups and nonprofits to showcase to potential customers, supporters and potential investors.

In addition to \$3.25 million in prizes and potential investment by One Spark associates, a number of venture capitalists were attracted to the event in search of investment opportunities.

Nonprofits added a special mix to the event, exposing visitors to ideas and worthy causes that many found they wanted to support.

Education-related projects demonstrated excellence and innovation in ways many One Spark visitors found heartening or exciting.

THE POTENTIAL IS REAL

For many, a look inside Snyder Memorial Church, which advocates want to turn into a music venue and training center, and a tour of the Barnett National Bank building showed up close the potential for two of downtown's vacant buildings.

Importantly, One Spark's success rivets attention on a key question:

Can Jacksonville become a recognized center for start-ups and innovation?

One Spark co-founder Elton Rivas and funder Peter Rummell certainly think so.

And there's evidence beyond this year's event.

The founders of One Spark have enjoyed initial success in helping creators and start-ups at Co-Work Jacksonville, which provides small office space along with shared common space and resources for individuals and start-ups.

KYN, a business accelerator, provides instruction and mentoring for start-ups. It was started by Rivas with financial support from Shad Khan, owner of the Jaguars, who has also invested in promising One Spark projects.

In a positive step for downtown, the Barnett building is being renovated to house One Spark.

Co-Work Jacksonville, KYN and classes from the University of North Florida as well as retail space and apartments that appeal to college students.

A YEAR-ROUND PRESENCE

One Spark itself will attempt to be a vigorous, year-round enterprise with events and programming to keep alive and grow the interest and engagement until next year's One Spark event.

It has drawn considerable national and global attention from cities interested in having their own similar event.

The next big One Spark event will be held in Berlin this September.

It will be similar in format but designed for that city's needs.

BIG CHALLENGES REMAIN

Rummell has invested significant money to underwrite One Spark during its two-year existence.

And he's admirably candid in acknowledging One Spark must eventually become financially sustainable.

But Rummell said One Spark's early success opens the potential to attract major supporters, perhaps Google or Microsoft or other global players eager to appeal to creators and entrepreneurs as well as the people who are interested in what they are doing.

It would be difficult to walk away from the sights, sounds, talent and intrigue of One Spark without feeling enriched and challenged by the engagements and the diversity of ideas.

Guest column: Florida must reform its flawed death penalty

4:25pm

Cheers: Kudos to three major leaders

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Letters: Defending coal, differing with Shad Khan

2:56pm

MORE OPINION

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It was the city's biggest event since the Super Bowl in 2005.

And it provided more evidence that Jacksonville is a city on the move.

On its own, One Spark can't serve as the salvation to revitalizing our downtown.

But with its remarkable display of energy and talent, One Spark is helping to revive and propel our entire city.

Let the spark become brighter still in the years to come.



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