

**ESSEX COUNTY EXECUTIVE DIVINCENZO ANNOUNCES PLANS  
FOR 42<sup>nd</sup> ANNUAL ESSEX COUNTY CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL**  
*Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ Returns as Premiere Festival Sponsor; Panasonic  
Joins as Gold Sponsor*

**Newark, NJ** – Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr. outlined the schedule of events for the 42<sup>nd</sup> annual Essex County Cherry Blossom Festival on Thursday, April 5<sup>th</sup>. The festival, which will be held Saturday, April 7<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, April 15<sup>th</sup>, highlights the blooming season of the 5,000 Cherry Blossom trees. The Executive also welcomed Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ as the Premiere Sponsor and Panasonic as the Gold Sponsor of the festival.

“The natural beauty of the cherry blossoms has been attracting visitors to the park since they were first planted there in the late 1920s. The festival has helped unify the community, highlighted the benefits of Branch Brook Park and the local neighborhood, and enabled the public to enjoy the blooming trees in a variety of ways,” DiVincenzo said. “We invite the public to come out and enjoy our display of 5,000 trees, which is larger than the national display in Washington, DC, and the most diverse collection in the world,” he added.

“We have an exciting line-up of activities where visitors can admire the beauty of the trees, learn about the history of our Parks System and engage in Japanese cultural demonstrations. The blossoming trees create a pink and white canopy that is perfect for picnics, photographs and simple enjoyment,” the Executive said. “We also want to welcome our sponsors, Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ and Panasonic. The support we receive from our corporate neighbors is instrumental in helping us stage activities that highlight the natural beauty of our parks and engage the community,” he added.

“Thank you to the County for this wonderful program. We are proud to support activities such as the Cherry Blossom Festival that promote community and healthy lifestyles,” Brigitte Hickey, Manager of Community Affairs for Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ, said.

“We are a Japanese corporation in Newark. It’s a natural that we would support this event, not just for this year, but for years to come,” Terri Seeney, Director of Community Relations and Outreach Programs for Panasonic, said. “We are looking forward to enjoying the Cherry Blossoms and the festival,” she added.

The *42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Essex County Cherry Blossom Festival* includes the following events:

**Cherry Blossom Challenge Annual Bike Race**

Race through Branch Brook Park in the Cherry Blossom Challenge, a competitive New Jersey tradition, or cheer on the cyclists while enjoying a day in the fresh, spring air. Various races occur throughout the morning, with the first race at 7 a.m. and the last race at 12 Noon. **Registration fees apply to racers.** It’s free to enter the park and watch. The *Cherry Blossom Challenge Bike Race* will be held as follows:

**Date:** Saturday, April 7, 2018  
**Time:** 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**Place:** Essex County Branch Brook Park  
Heller Parkway  
Newark, NJ

### **Cherry Blossom 10K Run**

The Cherry Blossoms provide a beautiful canopy for runners as they make their way through Branch Brook Park. A portion of the race proceeds benefit the Special Olympics. Online registration can be done at [www.compuscore.com](http://www.compuscore.com). Same day registration begins at 8 a.m. Advanced registration is recommended. Race starts at 10 a.m. It's free to enter the park and watch. The *Cherry Blossom 10K Run* will be held as follows:

**Date:** Sunday, April 8, 2018  
**Time:** Registration: 8 a.m.  
10K Race: 10 a.m.  
Disabled Start: 10:10 a.m.  
**Place:** Essex County Branch Brook Park  
Cherry Blossom Center  
Mill Street  
Newark, NJ

### **1-Mile Fun Run and Walk**

Celebrate the arrival of spring and get fit with your family or friends. Children are encouraged to run individually or as a member of a school team. Schools and groups must register in advance by contacting Jacquelyn Matthews at [jmatthews@parks.essexcountynj.org](mailto:jmatthews@parks.essexcountynj.org). **This is a free event.** All participants will receive a commemorative T-shirt. The *Fun Run and Walk* will be held as follows:

**Date:** Saturday, April 14, 2018  
**Time:** 9 a.m. Registration  
10 a.m. Race  
**Place:** Essex County Branch Brook Park  
Southern Division, Prudential Concert Grove  
Newark, NJ

### **Essex County Family Day**

The public is encouraged to come out and enjoy an afternoon of family-fun with a variety of events including live performances, children's activities, a fishing derby and more. Bring your own picnic lunch or purchase food from vendors who will be on site and enjoy the picturesque views overlooking the lake. Magician Matt Durham will present two shows at 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. The fishing derby begins at 12 noon. **Admission is free but food and other merchandise will be for sale.** The *Family Day* will be held as follows:

**Date:** Saturday, April 14, 2018  
**Time:** 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.  
**Place:** Essex County Branch Brook Park  
Southern Division, Prudential Concert Grove  
Newark, NJ

## **Bloomfest**

Enjoy a family day in the pink park! A packed schedule of events includes cultural demonstrations, children's activities, live music, a crafter's marketplace, food and more at the Cherry Blossom Welcome Center. Winners from the "Why My Essex County Park is Important to Me" essay contest for 4<sup>th</sup> graders and "Cherry Blossom Poster Contest" for 6<sup>th</sup> graders will be recognized on stage. Additional musical performances will be held at the Prudential Concert Grove in the Southern Division of the park. **Admission is free; food and merchandise will be for sale.** *Bloomfest* will be as follows:

**Date:** Sunday, April 15, 2018  
**Times:** 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
**Place:** Essex County Branch Brook Park  
**Main Area:** Cherry Blossom Center  
Mill Street, Newark, NJ  
**Second Stage:** Southern Division, Prudential Concert Grove  
Newark, NJ

## **Cherry Blossom Guided Tours**

Have knowledgeable guides take you on a 45-minute journey and point out the history hidden within Essex County Branch Brook Park's structure and design. Tours leave from the Essex County Cherry Blossom Welcome Center. Transportation around the park is provided. Tickets are \$8 person. Reservations are required and can be made at [essexcountyparks.org](http://essexcountyparks.org). The *Trolley Tours* will be held as follows:

**Dates:** Wednesday, April 18<sup>th</sup> to Sunday, April 22<sup>nd</sup>  
**Times:** 11 a.m., 12 Noon, 1 p.m. and 2 p.m.  
**Place:** Essex County Branch Brook Park  
Cherry Blossom Welcome Center  
Mill Street  
Newark, NJ

## **Historic Tours by Cell Phone**

This free, self-guided historic walking tour can be accessed by cell phone or smart phone. Spend the day exploring all 72 tour stops or pick and choose your favorites. One call to 973-433-9047 or a scan of the bar code at each tour stop unlocks a world of park history and horticultural information.

History, driving directions, a complete list of activities and a web cam where the public can monitor the cherry trees for the peak of the bloom season can be accessed by visiting [www.essexcountynj.org/branch-brook-park](http://www.essexcountynj.org/branch-brook-park).

The Essex County Cherry Blossom Festival is hosted by the Essex County Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. It is sponsored by Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of NJ, Panasonic and the Branch Brook Park Alliance.

### ***Cherry Tree Planting Campaign***

The general public and business community can participate in a fundraising campaign to purchase and plant Cherry Trees in Essex County Branch Brook Park. Each new Cherry Tree can be purchased for \$225 from the Essex County Parks Foundation, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. Contributions to the foundation are tax-deductible, checks can be made out to “*Essex County Parks Foundation*” and mailed to the **Essex County Parks Foundation, 115 Clifton Avenue, Newark, NJ 07104**. Please write “*Cherry Blossom Campaign*” on the memo line of the check.

Donations are being recognized in a “Cherry Blossom Giving Tree” located at the entrance of the Essex County Cherry Blossom Welcome Center. Donations of \$250 are recognized with a leaf on the Giving Tree and donations of \$1,000 or more are recognized with special plaques on the Giving Tree wall. Donors can choose to have their name inscribed on the Giving Tree or make the contribution in memory of a loved one.

Many of the original Cherry Trees planted in Branch Brook Park were donated to the Essex County Park System by the Bamberger and Mrs. Felix Fuld family in 1927. At its height, there were about 2,500 Cherry Trees in Branch Brook Park. According to the Branch Brook Park Alliance, the original Cherry Trees began to die because of old age and, in 2006, it was determined the original collection had diminished significantly.