



# Larry Taylor, Soybean Festival Founder

When the Mayor Larry Taylor first discussed the possibility of launching a festival in Martin back in 1993, he told Jerry Gresham, who had been tapped to manage what would become the Tennessee Soybean Festival, "If we can get this thing going, and it lasts for five years, we've got it made."

Twenty-five years later he's calling it a success.

After he was first elected to the leadership role and having served as Martin alderman prior, Taylor noted that while other towns in the county produced an event each year, Martin had not hosted anything of that magnitude since the days of the County Fair.

With the seed of an idea, he checked first



with his board and then turned to the University of Tennessee at Martin and Chancellor Margaret Perry to gauge the college's potential level of involvement.

"I told her that I wanted to have one person in charge of it," said Taylor.

"And I'd known Jerry Gresham, for a long time. He was a UTM professor and I'd seen his commitment as I'd coached his daughter's softball team. I knew, If he took on a project, he was going to see it through. He agreed, and she agreed to let him."

"Jerry gets most of the credit for getting it going," he concluded noting that Gresham was the reason for the current timing of the event around Labor Day.

"Jerry went so far as to get an almanac out to see how many times in the last few years it had rained," explained Taylor. "Out of last ten year it had only rained twice that first week of September. And that's how we came up with

Labor Day."

In Taylor's ten years as mayor from 1992-2002, he counts the festival and the recreational park as two of the greatest achievements for the city.

On a personal note, he enjoyed meeting Trisha Yearwood, "before she was a star" when she came to perform for the Festival and takes pride in noting that "we had top notch stars even we first got started". He also notes that the entertainment continued to expand and "keeps getting better and better."

Taylor gives recognition to the board of 25 years ago that was "progressive and wanted to make Martin a great place to live and improve the quality of life."

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*Daniel Donaldson II, O.D. & Russell Gilliam, O.D.*



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