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For immediate release

Oktoberfest in Kitchener-Waterloo  
makes people more helpful, study finds

A study by three Wilfrid Laurier University geography students found that citizens of Kitchener-Waterloo are more friendly and helpful during the annual Oktoberfest festival.

Posing as visitors, the fourth-year honors students asked directions on the street of passers-by. They then carried out similar experiments after the 10-day festival was over.

And they found that what the posters have been telling us all along: there is Gemutlichkeit (roughly translated as hospitality or goodwill) during Oktoberfest.

They found that 89 per cent of those asked were helpful during the festival, compared with 80 per cent who were interviewed after the festival was over. They also found that 52 per cent went even further and were described as "very helpful" in giving specific directions and help. Afterwards that figure fell to 32 per cent.

The research project was part of a course taught by Dr. Barry Boots dealing with perceptions of the urban environment and people's behaviour.

And it earned top marks for Julie O'Neill and Ken Todd of Waterloo, and Marilyn Kuntz of Formosa, Ontario. The students also conducted phone interviews, once again asking for help, and dropped self-addressed envelopes and counted how many were picked up and mailed by helpful people during Oktoberfest and afterwards.