

Baird celebrating 100th anniversary

Zac Brown Band to play for employees Thursday

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Robert W. Baird & Co. turns 100 this year, and the investment and wealth management firm is expecting about 7,000 people to celebrate the milestone anniversary this week on Milwaukee's lakefront.

Employees and guests, some from as far away as Shanghai, are arriving in Milwaukee for a get-together at the Wisconsin Center on Wednesday and then two "firsts" on the Summerfest grounds Thursday — the firm's first outdoor annual meeting at the BMO Harris Pavilion and the first concert in the newly renovated American Family Insurance Amphitheater. The Zac Brown Band will put on a private show for the Baird celebration attendees on Thursday evening.

Milwaukee-based Baird has about 3,600 employees, and most are bringing a guest to the celebration. About 3,000 are traveling to the two-day event from beyond Wisconsin, including 180 from outside the U.S.

"Milwaukee is just an awesome place, as you and I know, but about half of the people who are attending are from outside Milwaukee," Steve Booth, president and chief executive officer of Baird, said Tuesday. "Some of them have seen it but they really haven't seen it. We're trying to put Milwaukee's best foot forward by having it on the Summerfest grounds."



Baird is celebrating its 100th anniversary at Milwaukee's Summerfest grounds, including a private concert by the Zac Brown Band at the newly renovated American Family Insurance Amphitheater. MIKE DE SISTI / MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL

At a welcome event Wednesday night at the Wisconsin Center, employees, retirees and guests will fill 3,000 backpacks with personal-care items that will be distributed to United Way organizations in Milwaukee and eight other cities, said Baird spokeswoman Marianne Foster.

"We're bringing in people from all over the country so we also wanted to help in some other cities as well," she said.

After the annual meeting at the BMO Harris Pavilion, attendees will be able to warm up for the Zac Brown Band show by seeing the rock band 38 Special perform on a Summerfest side stage.

Baird usually holds its annual meeting indoors in March or April, but for the 100th, waited until June in the hope of getting decent weather for an outdoor celebration.

"It will be quite memorable and quite distinct from our typical annual meetings," Booth said.