



# 2020 THE BLOOM REPORT



---

**73rd North Carolina Azalea Festival  
THE COVID EXPERIENCE**

[www.ncazaleafestival.org](http://www.ncazaleafestival.org)

**Alison Baringer English | Executive Director  
910.216.9400 | [alison@ncazaleafestival.org](mailto:alison@ncazaleafestival.org)**









# THE MORE YOU KNOW

## ABOUT US

The North Carolina Azalea Festival is Wilmington's annual community celebration and the largest festival of its kind in the state. Founded in 1948, the Azalea Festival has emerged as Wilmington's premier event. The Festival's concerts, fairs and special events are attended by an **estimated 300,000 people**. Each event is a celebration, beginning with the arrival of Queen Azalea at the official opening of the five-day event. Everywhere the blooming azaleas offer colorful testimony to the rich heritage of coastal Carolina.

Staging the Azalea Festival – **every year for seventy-three years** – is a real community effort, and everyone who works on, participates in, or simply enjoys the Festival can be proud of these honors. They are a positive reflection on the greater Wilmington area as well. The North Carolina Azalea Festival's mission is to encourage volunteerism and civic participation as it contributes to the region's economy. In 2011, the University of North Carolina Wilmington completed a year-long study on the economic impact the Azalea Festival has on the City of Wilmington and the region. Results of this study concluded that the Azalea Festival has an over **\$50,000,000 impact on our local community annually**.

The 73rd NCAF was able to host a small handful of events before COVID-19 forced cancellations.

## MISSION

The mission of the North Carolina Azalea Festival is to be nationally recognized as a showcase for our community's rich array of artwork, gardens, history, and culture through recreational, educational and family-oriented events. The Festival **encourages volunteerism** and civic participation as it **contributes to the region's economy** and promotes the unique qualities of Wilmington's river-to-the-sea community.

## Our Festival Family

6	Directors on the Board (Volunteers)
3	Full-Time Staff
100+	Volunteer Chair/Co-Chair Leaders
27	Emeritus Volunteers
1,000+	Volunteers
12	Youth Committee Volunteers (AFYC)
5	Interns
5	Seasonal Ticket Staff

**\$50 Million  
Dollar Impact  
Annually**



**The North  
Carolina  
Azalea Festival is a  
501(c)3 non-profit**



First Queen Azalea Jacqueline White, 1948  
Photo Courtesy of the  
New Hanover Public Library



Carrie  
Underwood,  
2006



Queen Azaleas, 2015  
Mallory Hagan (2015)  
Jacqueline White Anderson (1948)



Queen Azalea  
Debra Paget  
and Ronald  
Reagan, 1959





# FESTIVAL EVENTS





# FESTIVAL EVENTS

Art Unveiling  
Chefs' Showcase

Scholarship Pageant Presented by BB&T  
Youth Art Contest Gallery Opening Presented by Coastal  
Children's Services (Virtual)



# FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING

AFYC (Azalea Festival Youth Committee)  
High School Writing Contest Presented by  
Wrightsville Beach Magazine  
Jean A. Lawler Emeritus Program

Past Presidents' Program  
Volunteer Appreciation  
Youth Art Contest Presented by Coastal Children's Services

# FESTIVAL ASSOCIATED EVENTS

Associated Events are predominantly organized/planned by an entity other than the Azalea Festival. The Azalea Festival uses its marketing reach and other Festival resources to help ensure these events are a success, with proceeds largely benefiting the individual entity. This is a way for the Azalea Festival to broaden our reach while supporting other groups in the community.

All Associated Events Were Canceled in 2020







# MEDIA RELATIONS

## PRESS COVERAGE

As it is our mission to become nationally recognized, we know we need our media partners to help spread the **Festival spirit**. Throughout the year, we keep our media friends up-to-date on current Festival events through **press releases** and meetings to **determine coverage**.

## PURCHASED AND TRADE MEDIA

The Azalea Festival works with many **regional media partners** to promote the Festival. We use multiple media platforms, including **radio, print, cable** and **network TV, outdoor billboard, mobile billboards**, and **digital**. Ads are purchased and also offered on trade for Festival tickets.

**\$5,834.91**

**TOTAL MEDIA VALUE**

**Due to the COVID-19 cancellation, the Festival halted the majority of our paid and trade marketing and advertising.**

**A normal year's paid and trade advertising among print, radio, cable and network TV, and digital equates to approximately \$175,000.**



## NCAF IN THE NEWS...

NC Azalea Festival Hosts Official  
Artwork Unveiling

November 2019

WWAY3

2020 Azalea Festival Cancelled, But  
Some Events May Be Rescheduled

March 2020

Cape Fear Weekend

Wilmington Reacts to Azalea Festival  
Cancellation

March 2020

Star News

LETTERS: Why focus on the Azalea  
Festival?

April 2020

New Bern Sun Journal

Canceled by COVID: Loss of 2020  
Azalea Festival will Cost Cape Fear  
Economy Millions

May 2020

WECT News

Transplanting the Azaleas

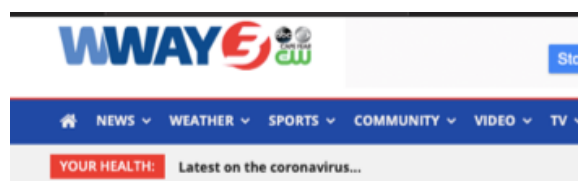
July 2020

Wilma Magazine

New Dates Announced in 2021 in  
Wilmington's Azalea Festival

August 2020

WRAL News



Home > News > Carolinas > Organizers cancel 2020 Azalea Festival

NEWS CAROLINAS LOCAL NEWS NC NEW HANOVER

### ORGANIZERS CANCEL 2020 AZALEA FESTIVAL

By WWAY News - March 12, 2020 8:47 PM

### LETTERS: Why focus on the Azalea Festival?



MOST POPULAR  
1 Ranking North Carolina's top football prospects for 2021  
Nov. 31 - 40



### Transplanting the Azaleas

North Carolina Azalea Festival navigates new realities this year

JUNE 30, 2020 | BY JENNY CALUSON PHOTOGRAPHY BY MEGAN DEITZ



### Canceled by COVID: Loss of 2020 Azalea Festival will cost Cape Fear economy millions



WECT investigates the impact of the Azalea Festival being canceled



Home > Local News > NC Azalea Festival hosts official artwork unveiling

### NC Azalea Festival hosts official artwork unveiling

By WWAY News - November 22, 2019 11:32 PM







# MARKETING OUTREACH

The Azalea Festival also uses Festival marketing channels to keep various audiences updated on Festival events. Three platforms heavily utilized are our website, e-marketing emails, and social media.

**682,513**

WEBSITE PAGEVIEWS  
www.ncazaleafestival.org  
(May 1, 2019 - August 1, 2020)

**210,515**

EMAILS OPENED  
(May 1, 2019 - August 1, 2020)

**112,754**

WEBSITE USERS  
www.ncazaleafestival.org  
(May 1, 2019 - August 1, 2020)

**19,747**

EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

**50,312**

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS  
(Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)

**38%**

AVG. EMAIL OPEN RATE  
(Industry Avg. 20%)

**370+**

SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS  
(Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)  
(May 1, 2019 - August 1, 2020)

**2020 VIRTUAL FESTIVAL**

Social Media Reach

Social Media Responses

**11,400**

**973**

## WEBSITE

The Festival Website is used to provide **event information** and to **promote event ticket sales**. It is also used heavily for **registration** and **application** purposes: volunteer, Street Fair vendor, Parade, Scholarship Pageant, Boxing Competition, Downtown Window Decorating Contest, and local/regional musical performers. The website is also used to funnel **donations** and a place for **sponsor logo recognition**. Additionally, the website is used to **showcase our Invited Guests** and houses Festival **historical photos**.

## E-MARKETING

Festival E-marketing is also used to provide **event information** and to **promote event ticket sales**. Through our E-marketing campaigns, the Festival is able to drill down audiences into specific groups, targeting those more likely to purchase certain event tickets or merchandise based on past sales. We are also able to **target specific event attendees**, informing them of **weather delays** or other **necessary event information**. Main Stage Concert attendees receive an email the day prior to their show with relevant information, and Street Fair Vendors receive information about what else is happening during Festival week, in case they should want to join the festivities. Emails are also used to **stay in communication** with our volunteer chairs, Emeritus volunteers, and Past Presidents. **Press releases** are sent out through our E-marketing platform, which makes them more visually-appealing and informative. Higher-level sponsors are listed on every email, which provides an amazing amount of **sponsor exposure**. **New in 2020**, the Festival started a monthly E-newsletter, "**Here's the Dirt**," to provide insider looks and special perks to our fans.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Festival Social Media is also used to provide **event information** and to **promote event ticket sales**. The Festival relies heavily on **contesting** on its social media, giving away over 300+ event tickets annually. These contests **drive social media engagement, promote events**, and (since they are often tied to our sponsors), provide great **sponsor exposure and interaction**.



[View this email in your browser](#)



## HERE'S THE DIRT

JULY 2020

Welcome to our monthly newsletter! Each month we'll give you a quick, insider look at happenings within the Azalea Festival, including: recent news and events, a volunteer spotlight, partner highlights, how you can help, and a look back at Festival history.

## WHAT'S NEW

### Post Details



North Carolina Azalea Festival at Wilmington, Inc.

Published by Sarah Kenney [?] · May 8 ·

\*\*\*\* GIVEAWAY TIME! \*\*\*\*

During #socialdistancing I've \_\_\_\_\_ for the first time (fill in the blank).

Let us know in the comments below for a chance to win one of our NEW social distancing shirts. The winner will be picked at random on Monday, May 11th at 12 noon.

SOFTSTYLE TEE



THIS IS  
MY  
SOCIAL  
DISTANCING  
SHIRT

Get More Likes, Comments and Shares  
When you boost this post, you'll show it to more people.

2,252  
People Reached

257  
Engagements

Boost Post

26

52 Comments 3 Shares



Check out Kim picking up her new Traveler Grill from [Wilmington Grill](#)! Kim won this grill during our [#VirtualStreetFair](#) event; thanks for joining us, Kim!

Wilmington Grill is the sponsor of the Street Fair Music and Beer Garden. Now that it's grilling season, check out [#local](#) Wilmington Grill!

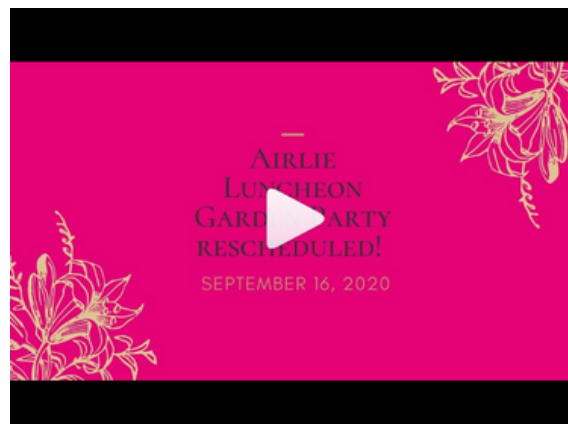


Get More Likes, Comments and Shares  
When you boost this post, you'll show it to more people.

1,951  
People Reached

81  
Engagements

Boost Post



ncazaleafest · Following



ncazaleafest The North Carolina Azalea Festival is pleased to announce we have rescheduled the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party!

Mark your calendars for Wednesday, September 16, 2020! We know - a wacky Wednesday Fall Garden Party - a once in a lifetime, historic Azalea Festival event you won't want to miss!



422 views

APRIL 22

Add a comment...

Post





## NEW IN 2020!

With **73 years of history**, the North Carolina Azalea Festival has many **traditions** and heritage events. However, we still love to **plant new events and programming** in efforts to stay fresh and relevant with today's trends and culture. Take a look at the new events and programs we started in 2020!



### 20/20 Xperience

**Raising \$6,320**, this was a new concept to highlight Festival events and VIP Xperiences while **promoting an Encore Sponsor**.

### UNCW Fellowship

A way to partner back with a **Benefactor Sponsor**, utilizing money we already spend while potentially **opening a new revenue source** for donations.



### MOU with the City of Wilmington

**Five-year deal** confirming a City/Festival partnership towards **promoting economic growth** in the region.

### Festival Fun Guide

Creation of a new guide/map which would **lower Festival expenses** while **increasing sponsor and event promotion** through **wider circulation** and quantities printed.



### Azalea Suite and Azalea Festival Pops

**Partnership** with Wilmington Symphony Orchestra - a **commissioning of Azalea Suite**, a symphony just for us!

### Comedy Show

**Partnership** with an independent organization to bring a **new event**, the Azalea Festival Comedy Show in conjunction with the Past Presidents' Party.







# SEEDS OF TOMORROW

## FESTIVAL VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN

Every non-profit needs a good vision and strategic plan to ensure **proper growth** and **stability**. In 2018 the Azalea Festival Board of Directors and staff came together to **develop** our next strategic plan and vision to take us into 2024.

### VISION

**By 2024 the North Carolina Azalea Festival will be a nationally recognized North Carolina signature event with an expansive network of support and financial stability.**

A few of the **enhanced visions** we are working on as part of our strategic plan...

- A highly engaging 75th anniversary in 2022
- \$100,000+ revenue generation in "off season"
- Estimated attendance of 500,000
- Partnership/membership in 5-10 statewide organizations/associations
- 5-10 events/programs specifically tailored to a new, niche, and/or minority crowd
- High level of community engagement and partnerships
- Build staff bench and appreciation
- \$500,000 in a "Rainy Day" fund
- \$1 million in sponsorship revenues annually
- \$50,000 in grant revenues annually
- 15% growth in Main Stage concert ticket sales





## OUR PROGRESS

Check out just some of the progress we made in 2020 on our Strategic Plan and 2024 Vision...

### — Evergreen Event Sponsors

Carolina Active Care Chiropractic  
Coach Reggie - The Business Grower  
Come Hear NC  
Corning Credit Union  
CPI Security  
Harris Teeter

### Expansion of Evergreen Event Sponsorships

Creation of new sponsorship **opportunities** which led to **four new Evergreen sponsors** equaling \$14,000.

## Comedy Show

This event was created in **partnership** with a promotion company owned by a person of color in efforts to broaden Festival appeal and **diversify** the Festival lineup with a **new event**.



### Membership in the North Carolina Presenters Consortium

A **state-wide** association.

## Azalea Suite and Azalea Festival Pops

Partnership increasing our **community engagement** and tailoring an event to a **niche crowd**.



## MORE PROGRESS...

- Festival Executive Director judged annual awards for the Florida Festivals and Events Association, and gave an educational presentation at their annual conference; garnering **national attention** to the Azalea Festival.
- The Festival MOU with the City ushered in new heights of **community engagement** and buy-in.
- Began **relationships** with the Cape Fear Collective and Arts for Equity grass-roots programs, to bring a focus on **diversity** and **inclusion** to the Festival.
- "Here's the Dirt," our monthly e-newsletter started in May, 2020, helps keep up our **community engagement** and drives **revenue in the off-season**.





# FESTIVAL SUPPORTERS

## AZALEA FESTIVAL SPONSORSHIPS

As a **501(c)3**, the Azalea Festival relies on the generous support of sponsors for the funding needed to put on an event of this magnitude and **impact to our community**. Sponsors are treated as **Festival family**; Festival staff truly wants what is best for each sponsor and to make sure the sponsor goals and objectives are met. Some sponsor levels are set to a specific price and package; these sponsors appreciate a **Festival ticket package** and **sponsor logo recognition Festival-wide**. Other sponsorships are more **tailored** to fit an individual sponsor's brand, needs, and goals. As a 501(c)3, some of the Festival sponsorship monies are tax-deductible for our sponsors.



**GLEN DALE EVENT SPONSORS:** Atrium Health, Blade & Bow/Tanqueray, LM Restaurants, The Anniston Quinn, United Rentals

**BENEFACTOR SPONSORS:** Hawthorne Residential Partners, North Carolina Ports, Neuwirth Motors, New Hanover Regional Medical Center, UNCW, Wells Fargo

**GABLE EVENT SPONSORS:** BB&T, now Truist, BMW of Wilmington, Lowes Foods, Sarah E. Pless, DDS: Renaissance Dental Studio, Seaside Grown, Tails Piano Bar, Wilmington Grill, Wilmington Health

**DONOR SPONSORS:** Chart Local, Coastal Children's Services, Coca-Cola, Corning, PNC, PPD, Prestige Beverage Group, Shipman & Wright, LLP, South State Bank, WWAY

**EVERGREEN EVENT SPONSORS:** Carolina Active Care Chiropractic PA, Coach Reggie - The Business Grower, Come Hear NC, Corning Credit Union, CPI Security, Harris Teeter, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Pulte Group, US Cellular, Village at River Landing, Wrightsville Beach Magazine

**TRANSPORTATION SPONSORS:** Azalea Limousine Service, Neuwirth Motors

**RV TRANSPORTATION:** Rex & Sons RVs

**LEGAL REPRESENTATION BY:** Ward and Smith, P.A.

**OFFICIAL STYLIST FOR OUR ROYALTY:** Camille's of Wilmington

89% Sponsor  
Retention

# SPONSOR RECOGNITION

Website Footer



E-mail Footer, All Marketing E-mails

The North Carolina Azalea Festival Thanks Its Sponsors!

Cloudwyze | Hotel Ballast  
Stella | Wilmington Eye  
Duke Energy  
NC Education Lottery  
New Hanover Printing  
Social House Vodka  
Wells Fargo | Atrium Health  
Blade & Bow | LM Restaurants  
Tanqueray | The Anniston Quinn  
United Rentals  
Hawthorne Residential Partners  
NC Ports | Newwirth Motors  
New Hanover Regional Medical Center  
UNCW | BB&T  
Sarah E. Pless, DDS: Renaissance Dental Studio  
Seaside Grown  
Silverton Mortgage Specialists  
Tails | Wilmington Grill  
Wilmington Health | Chart Local  
Coastal Children's Services  
Lowes Foods

Coca Cola | Corning  
Fullcolorlasers.com | PNC | PPD  
Prestige Beverage Group  
South State Bank | WWAY  
Coach Reggie- The Business Grower  
BMW of Wilmington  
Carolina Active Chiropractic PA  
Come Hear NC | Corning Credit Union  
CPI Security  
Del Webb/Pulte Homes  
Harris Teeter | Nothing Bundt Cakes  
US Cellular  
Village at River Landing  
Wrightsville Beach Magazine  
Bullock, LLC DBA Cotton Exchange  
Camille's of Wilmington | Fly ILM  
Home Paramount Pest Control  
Matthew's Motors  
Port City Lawn Games  
Rex and Sons RV  
Ward and Smith | Wyndam Resorts

## Website Sponsor Page

### Sponsors & Partners

Thank you for your support of the North Carolina Azalea Festival!

— Encore Sponsors

+ Major Sponsor

+ Glen Dale Azalea Event Sponsors

+ Benefactors

+ Gable Azalea Event Sponsors

+ Donors

+ Evergreen Event Sponsors

+ Community Partners

+ Diamond Patrons

+ Patrons

## Digital Ad



# PATRON PACKAGES

Patron packages are available for individuals and businesses looking for a comprehensive Festival ticket package. As a financial way to support the Festival, these packages are the foundation of Festival fundraising. Patrons receive a sponsor listing on the Festival website.







## SPONSOR BLOOMS

While we may not have had a traditional Azalea Festival this year, we still found plenty of ways to spread the good our Festival sponsor partners are doing in our community!



### Here's the Dirt

We now **highlight** a sponsor each month in our e-newsletter in the "Cool Sponsor Alert" section.

### Minecraft Competition

A new competition, hosted in Minecraft, was **created in partnership** with UNCW ESports Department, helping to highlight UNCW.



### #PatronPawsFriday

Each Friday we highlight a Patron sponsor in our #PatronPawsFriday post on social media.

### Wilmington Open T-Shirt

**Promotion and partnership** in a campaign with Bud Light, to fundraise and support local restaurants.



Though we weren't able to see these through to fruition (due to COVID cancellations), we had an amazing lineup of sponsor integrations ready to take our events to the next level, including...

- A Seaside Grown/Social House Vodka Bloody Mary Bar at the Garden Party
- A Tails Piano Lounge at the Patrons' Party
- A Tanqueray Hospitality Suite at the Main Stage
- The Pulte Group "Better with Age" Conversation Lounge at the Street Fair



# THANK YOU!



**We'll Festival  
Again in 2021!**

