

THE BLOOM REPORT

2023



76th North Carolina Azalea Festival
www.ncazaleafestival.org
Alison Baringer | Executive Director
910.216.9400 | 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 250,000 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 over seventy-five 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**.

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**

- 5 Directors on the Board (Volunteers)
- 4 Year-Round Staff
- 6 Part-Time Seasonal Staff
- 131 Volunteer Chair/Co-Chair Leaders
- 29 Emeritus Volunteers
- 1,000+ Volunteers
- 10 Youth Committee Volunteers (AFYC)
- 3 Interns

**\$50 Million
Dollar
Impact
Annually**



**501(c)3
non-
profit**

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



Carrie
Underwood,
2006



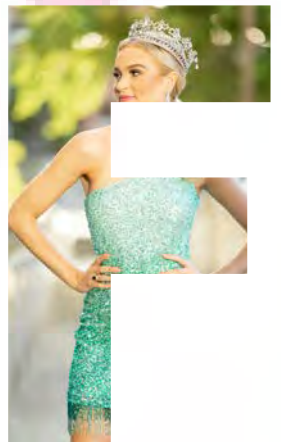
Queen Azaleas, 2015
Mallory Hagan (2015)
Jacqueline White Anderson (1948)



Queen Azalea
Debra Paget
and Ronald
Reagan, 1959



FESTIVAL EVENTS



FESTIVAL EVENTS

Airlie Luncheon Garden Party
Art Unveiling Presented by The Murchison Group
Azalea Sweep
Azaleas on Tour Porch Parade Presented by Custom Colors
Azalea Sun Run Presented by Harris Teeter
Boxing
Brigade Boys & Girls Club Visit
Celebrity Reception
Chefs' Showcase Presented by LM Restaurants Family of Brands
Concert Series
Fashion Show Presented by Lumina Gem
Fireworks Presented by Corning Credit Union

Governmental Press Conference
Hospital Visit
Parade Presented by Dollar General
Past Presidents' Party
Patrons' Party Gala
Performing Arts Stage Presented by Novant Health
Queen's Coronation
Queen's Dinner & Dance Party
Scholarship Princess Pageant
School Visit
Street Fair Presented by DGX
Tunes & Blooms Presented by
Wilmington Grill

FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING

AFYC (Azalea Festival Youth Committee)
Cadet Escorts
International Blooms | Diversity & Inclusion
Festival Fun Guide
Middle School Writing Contest

Jean A. Lawler Emeritus Program
Past Presidents' Program
Pin Pal Program Presented by Wilmington Grill
Queen's Court
Volunteer Appreciation
Youth Art Contest

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.

Ambassador Tea...with the Cape Fear Garden Club
After Garden Get Down...with LM Restaurants
Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour and Ribbon Cutting ©
...with the Cape Fear Garden Club
Coin Show...with the Lower Cape Fear Coin Club
Friday Night Films: Azalea Festival Edition...with Cucalorus
Historic Wilmington Home Tour...with Historic Wilmington Foundation
Jingle on the Beach...with Cape Fear Volunteer Center
Juried Art Show and Sale...with the Wilmington Art Association
Cinderella... with Thalian Association Community Theatre
Paws on Parade, The Official Dog Garden Paw-ty...with paws4people®





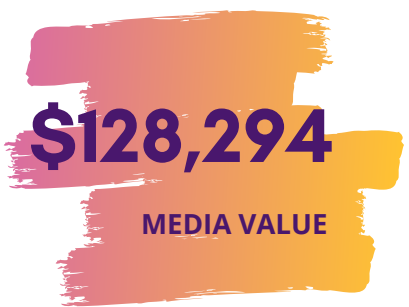
MEDIA RELATIONS

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**. As one of the largest events in the state, local and regional (and sometimes national!) coverage is saturated with Festival happenings Festival week.

PURCHASED AND TRADE MEDIA

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



\$21,748 Radio Buys

\$2,483 Print Buys

\$11,800 Cable and Network TV Buys

\$25,994 Digital Buys

\$66,469 Estimated Total Trade Media

MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS

The Azalea Festival in the Media in 2023

Grammy-Award Winner Carly Pearce to Perform at the 76th Annual NC Azalea Festival

By Sponsored Content April 10, 2023

Grammy-award winner country music singer and songwriter Carly Pearce will perform at the 76th Annual NC Azalea Festival, Thursday, April 13, 2023. Tickets are [on sale](#) now.

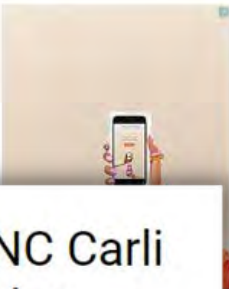
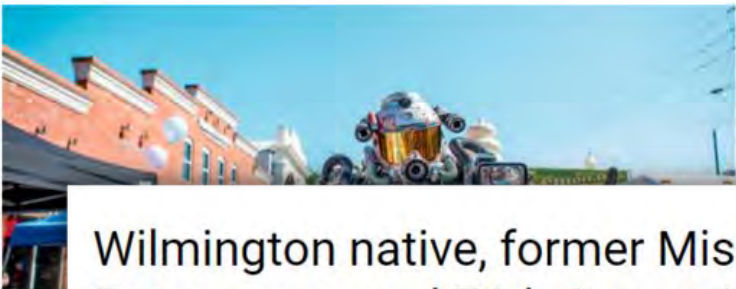


OUT AND ABOUT

2023 North Carolina Festival Guide: 100+ festivals in NC for spring and beyond

Whether you're in the mood for music, shopping, food, camping, fitness or arts and crafts, festivals in NC offer something for all ages and interests.

Posted 7:00 a.m. Apr 20 - Updated 1:42 p.m. Apr 21



Wilmington native, former Miss NC Carli Batson crowned 76th Queen Azalea

April 12, 2023 by Emily Andrews

LOCAL

Facing different challenges, how the Azalea Festival is adapting to a changing Wilmington



John Staton
Wilmington StarNews

Published 6:02 a.m. ET April 6, 2023 | Updated 7:46 a.m. ET April 6, 2023



Home > Arts & Culture

Grammy Award-Winning Old Crow Medicine Show to Perform at the 76th Annual NC Azalea Festival

By Sponsored Content April 3, 2023





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.

698,213

WEBSITE PAGEVIEWS
www.ncazaleafestival.org
(June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023)

216,703

EMAILS OPENED
(June 1, 2022- May 31, 2023)

227,134

WEBSITE USERS
www.ncazaleafestival.org
(June 1, 2022 - May 31, 2023)

36,484

EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

59,844

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS
(Facebook, Instagram, TikTok)

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, Azaleas on Tour Porch Parade, 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**. Festival 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**. The Festival also has a monthly E-newsletter, "**Here's the Dirt**," which provides insider access and special perks to our fans. We boast a **30.5% e-mail open rate for "Here's the Dirt"**; the average email open rate for event industries is only 20.51%.

SOCIAL MEDIA

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

1:48



ncazaleafest



2,721
Posts

12.6K
Followers

1,643
Following

North Carolina Azalea Festival

Festival

The official Instagram of the North Carolina Azalea Festival

April 12th-16th, 2023

Purchase your event tickets below

5725 Oleander Dr, Ste B7, Wilmington, North Carolina

linktr.ee/ncazaleafest



Followed by [missrosehill_nc](#),
[missspiveyscorner_nc](#) and 83 others

Following ▾

Message

Contact



75th Stories



GP Highlig...



74 Waves-...



74 Waves -...



74 Waves-...



Festival Sponsors














Our Glen Dale, Benefactor, Gable, Donor Sponsors, Evergreen Sponsors and Community Partners










North Carolina Azalea Festival at Wilmington, Inc.

March 1 · 🌳

...







Let's be honest... It's not a party without [Wicked Weed Brewpub](#). Lucky for us, we have them as a sponsor.

#ncacf #ncazaleafest #azaleafestival #wickedweed



👍❤️ Glynis Lanier, Brittney Putman and 48 others 2 comments

👍 Like
💬 Comment
➦ Share

	Here's the Dirt - June 2023 Subject: Summer at the Azalea Festival! Sent Jun 1st, 2023 at 1:26PM EDT	26,674	30.5%	
	Chris Gore Board Member Announce Subject: Introducing our Newest NCAF Board Mem Sent May 15th, 2023 at 6:00PM EDT	26,686	31.8%	
	Here's the Dirt - May Subject: Here's What's Happening at the Azalea Fe Sent May 1st, 2023 at 12:37PM EDT	26,647	29.3%	0.2%
	Volunteer Appreciation Party Invite Subject: See you Sunday! Sent Apr 28th, 2023 at 1:35PM EDT	146	50.0%	4.8%
	2023 Associated Events Recap Subject: A week full of #FestivalFamily Sent Apr 28th, 2023 at 11:52AM EDT	34,869	12.6%	0.1%
	Mini Golf Photos Subject: Check Out These Mini Golf Pics! Sent Apr 20th, 2023 at 2:35PM EDT	53	56.3%	39.6%

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!

















SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT




We'd like to give a special shout out to our Scholarship Pageant Host sponsor, RiverLanding!

The NCAF Scholarship Pageant is the second largest provider of scholarships to young women in the state (only second to the Miss North Carolina Pageant). We're so thankful to have such amazing sponsors!

Tickets for the Pageant are available now at the Festival Ticket Office!

A NOTE ABOUT OUR FESTIVAL FRIEND



Lilly Pulitzer will be featured in our inaugural Azalea Spring Fashion Show on April 1st. They are also a proud 2023 Pin Pal Partner!

[Get Fashion Show Tickets Here](#)

[Be a Pin Pals Partner Too, Here!](#)

City of Wilmington 21 Seeds Tequila A New Earth Project Blade & Bow Flow Automotive Food Lion LM Restaurants Family of Brands South State Bank Hawthorne Residential NC Ports North Carolina Education Lottery Novant Health UNCW Business Growers GriffinEstep Benefit Group Michael & Russell, PLLC US Cellular Wells Fargo Wilmington Eye Wilmington Grill Accellacare	Bitty & Beau's Coffee Brooklyn Arts Center Catalyst Clinical Research CloudWyz Coca-Cola Corning Incorporated Miller-Motte College PNC Prestige Beverage Group Total Wine & More United Bank Wilmington Convention Center Wilmington Health WWAY Capital Vacations Corning Credit Union CPI Security Custom Colors Harris Teeter Home Paramount Pest Control Jungle Rapids Lumina Gem Matthews Motors	Nabell Winslow Wealth Management nCino Neil Leonard, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Carolina Premier Properties Nothing Bundt Cakes Professional Healthcare Consultants River Landing Southeast Foundation and Crawl Space Repair T-Mobile The Murchison Group Tidal Wellness Trillium Wyndham Vacations Azalea Limousine Services Camille's of Wilmington Dynamic Digital Rex and Sons RV Ward and Smith
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2023 PLANTINGS

NEW IN 2023!

With **76 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 held in the 2023 Festival year!



Sun Run 5K Presented by Harris Teeter

Brought in a new partner, Go-Time, to professionally time the event and moved it to the sands of Wrightsville Beach- one of the only sand races in the area!



New Volunteer Committee

Created a new committee designated to recruiting volunteers for the Festival as well as pairing volunteers to positions and to help fill gaps and create stronger event teams!



Fashion Show

Created a new event - a Fashion Show- to raise funds while utilizing our partnership and collaborating with one of our long time supporters LM Restaurants to help achieve their sponsorship goal of bringing in more people to their restaurants.



Merchandise Committee

Created a new committee designed to optimize our merchandise sales by transporting merchandise, recruiting volunteers to sell merchandise, and helping in the design process of new merchandise.

A Sustainable Garden Party

With a new zero waste goal at the Garden Party we diverted a half ton of waste with the help of a new sponsor-A New Earth Project/Atlantic Packaging - and eliminated one-use plastics.



UNCW Fellowship Event/Seahawks Give

Hosted a co-branded reception with UNCW to highlight the intern Fellowship Program. Participated in Seahawks Give; gaining \$1500 in donations to the scholarship, resulting in a match unlock.



Middle School Writing Contest

Changed High School Writing Contest to Middle School; increasing participation by 1400% and reaching a new audience



Office Committee

Created a new committee that helped with everything office including: creating no parking signs, stuffing sponsor packets, organization, repairs and maintenance, and much more!





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 2023 on our Strategic Plan and Vision...



International Blooms

Created a new program highlighting a different country's culture each year. Resulted in expanded programming, **new community engagement**, and **new sponsorship revenue streams**.

DEI Efforts

Supported the Chamber's Latin American and African American Business Councils as a sponsor, and collaborated with UNCW's Mi Casa Program. Resulted in more **community engagement** both at the sponsor level and in our Scholarship Pageant diversity.



Navy Week

Partnered with the U.S. Navy to plan Navy Week during the Festival. Highlight - Leap Frog team parachuting onto the Parade route to kick off the Parade!



Venmo Account

Opened a Festival Venmo account for on-site Pin Pal selling and donations, **targeting a younger demographic's** purchasing preferences.



MORE PROGRESS...

- Added a Wine Pull to the Chefs' Showcase creating a **new revenue stream** and sold out in this first year.
- Developed a new staff position for Marketing, **building staff bench**.
- Increased synergy within merchandising by focusing on a "theme" of 2023. Sold oyster blocks by Ana Brown and also partnered with two local **women-owned businesses** that created jewelry reminiscent of this year's artwork.
- Partnered with Cucalorus, the Alex Highsmith Family Foundation, and Cape Fear Volunteer Center to create three **new events with niche audiences** - one in the **off season**- while **increasing community engagement**.
- Switched email platforms, adding **new contesting** and **ticket targeting** features.



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: 21 Seeds Tequila, A New Earth Project, Blade & Bow, Flow Automotive, Food Lion, LM Restaurants Family of Brands, South State Bank

BENEFACTOR SPONSORS: Hawthorne Residential Partners, NC Ports, North Carolina Education Lottery, Novant Health, UNCW

GABLE EVENT SPONSORS: Business Growers, GriffinEstep Benefit Group, Michael & Russell PLLC, US Cellular, Wells Fargo, Wilmington Eye, Wilmington Grill

DONOR SPONSORS: Acellacare, Bitty & Beau's Coffee, Brooklyn Arts Center, Catalyst Clinical Research, CloudWyze, Coca-Cola, Corning Inc., Miller-Motte College, PNC, Prestige Beverage Group, Total Wine & More, United Bank, Wilmington Convention Center, Wilmington Health, WWAY

EVERGREEN EVENT SPONSORS: Capital Vacations, Corning Credit Union, CPI Security, Custom Colors, Harris Teeter, Home Paramount Pest Control, Jungle Rapids, Lumina Gem, Matthews Motors, Nabell Winslow Wealth Management, nCino, Neil Leonard Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Carolina Premier Properties, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Professional Healthcare Consultants, River Landing, Southeast Foundation and Crawl Space Repair, T-Mobile, The Murchinson Group, Tidal Wellness, Trillium, Wilmington Grill, Wilmington International Airport

TRANSPORTATION SPONSORS: Azalea Limousine Service

RV TRANSPORTATION: Rex & Sons RVS

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

OFFICIAL STYLIST FOR OUR ROYALTY: Camille's of Wilmington

SPONSOR RECOGNITION

E-mail Footer, All Marketing E-mails

Website Home Page & Sponsor Page Footer

Festival Sponsors



Our Glen Dale, Benefactor, Gable, Donor Sponsors, Evergreen Sponsors and Community Partners



<p>Gail Brown - Queen Azalea</p> <p>2021 Queen Azalea</p>	<p>Angie Brinkman - Queen Festival/Princess</p> <p>2021 Queen Festival/Princess</p>	<p>Angie Brinkman - Miss North Carolina 2022</p> <p>2022 Miss North Carolina</p>	<p>The Queen's Court and VM Keytel Escorts</p>	
<p>Ana Brown 2021 Festival Queen</p>	<p>Harold Davis Festival King</p>	<p>Frances Waller Award Winning Artist</p>	<p>Margaret Waller-Stargell President, White Throat Vineyard</p>	
<p>Trot Nixon 2021 Festival King</p>	<p>Adm. Daryl Canale Award, Festival Queen</p>			

Save time. Save money. Every day.

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Xpress For Less

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS!



- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| <p>City of Wilmington
21 Seeds Tequila
A New Earth Project
Blade & Bow
Flow Automotive
Food Lion
LM Restaurants Family of Brands
South State Bank
Hawthorne Residential
NC Ports
North Carolina Education Lottery
Novant Health
UNCW
Business Growers
GriffinEstep Benefit Group
Michael & Russell, PLLC
US Cellular
Wells Fargo
Wilmington Eye
Wilmington Grill
Accellacare</p> | <p>Bitty & Beau's Coffee
Brooklyn Arts Center
Catalyst Clinical Research
CloudWye
Coca-Cola
Corning Incorporated
Miller-Motte College
PNC
Prestige Beverage Group
Total Wine & More
United Bank
Wilmington Convention Center
Wilmington Health
WWAY
Capital Vacations
Corning Credit Union
CPI Security
Custom Colors
Harris Teeter
Home Paramount Pest Control
Jungle Rapids
Lumina Gem
Matthews Motors</p> | <p>Nabell Winslow Wealth Management
nCino
Neil Leonard, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices
Carolina Premier Properties
Nothing Bundt Cakes
Professional Healthcare Consultants
River Landing
Southeast Foundation and Crawl Space Repair
T-Mobile
The Murchison Group
Tidal Wellness
Trillium
Wyndham Vacations
Azalea Limousine Services
Camille's of Wilmington
Dynamic Digital
Rex and Sons RV
Ward and Smith</p> |
|--|--|---|



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.

39
Diamond
Patrons

200
Patrons



SPONSOR BLOOMS

We know there is A LOT to take in during Festival week - so you may have missed these awesome ways to interact with some of our sponsors and sponsorships. Take a peek at just a few of our favorites from this year...



Bitty & Beau's Coffee

We partnered with Bitty & Beau's Coffee to provide free coffee/teas at the Celebrity Reception, Garden Party, and Parade...while providing a very public platform for their mission.

International Blooms

Through this new program, we were able to acquire new sponsorship funds from nCino and Business Growers - the latter providing a Million Dollar Margarita Room at the Patrons' Gala!



21 Seeds Tequila

Brought a new sponsor and liquor variety to the Garden Party - in part due to Mexico being the International Blooms inaugural honored country.

Jungle Rapids

Formalized an existing partnership to create a new event: the Mini Golf Party with Alex Highsmith; which sold out three time slots in this first year.



Other fun partnership notes...

- Secured a new sponsorship with Total Wine & More...providing wine for the Celebrity Reception and Patrons' Gala.
- For the first time - hit a goal of 10 Azalea Sweep Teams!
- Partnered with the UNCW Department of Sustainability to help with a Garden Party Zero Waste goal with support of New Earth sponsorship.
- Partnered with La Grande Festival/radio station to help reach the Latin demographic.
- Through a new partnership contract, utilized our ticketing platform and added Patron Packages & Parade Bleachers for online purchase, creating a revenue of \$133,328 in online sales for these two items; and selling out Parade Bleachers prior to event for the first time in years.



