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.
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

NCAF
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®
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.

MEDI A VALUE

<table>
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<th>Media Platform</th>
<th>Media Value</th>
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<td>Print Buys</td>
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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 is set to perform at the 76th Annual NC Azalea Festival. Tickets are on sale now.

**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.

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

April 12, 2023  by Emily Andrews

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

John Stetson  Wilmington StarNews

Published 6:00 a.m. ET April 9, 2023  Updated 3:45 a.m. ET April 9, 2023

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

By Sponsored Content  April 2, 2023
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.

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%.

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.

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.

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<th>Website Pageviews</th>
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<table>
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<th>Emails Opened</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Email Subscribers</th>
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<td>36,484</td>
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</table>
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

Followed by missrosehill_nc, missspiveyscorner_nc and 83 others
Here's the Dirt - June 2023
Subject: Summer at the Azalea Festival
Sent May 1, 2023 at 1:16PM EDT

Here's the Dirt - May
Subject: Here's What's Happening at the Azalea Fest
Sent May 1, 2023 at 12:54PM EDT

Mini Golf Photos
Subject: Check Out These Azalea Golf Photos!
Sent April 28, 2023 at 2:11PM EDT

Volunteer Appreciation Party Invite
Subject: See you Sunday!
Sent April 20, 2023 at 1:23PM EDT

2023 Associated Events Recap
Subject: A week full of Festivity!
Sent April 28, 2023 at 11:52AM EDT

Chris Gore Board Member Announcement
Subject: Introducing our Nearest NCAF Board Member
Sent May 15, 2023 at 6:00PM EDT

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.
#ncaf #ncazaleafest #azaleafestival #wickedweed

Glynis Lanier, Britney Putman and 48 others
2 comments

Thank you to our Sponsors!

Azalea Festival

Sponsor Spotlight

River Landing

A Note About Our Festival Friend

Lilly Pulitzer

Get Tickets Here

Be a Pin Pal Partner Too Here!
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!

**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.

**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!

**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.

**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.

**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!
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.
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.
SPONSOR RECOGNITION
Website Home Page & Sponsor Page Footer

Thank you to our Sponsors!

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.
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.
Thank You