



THE BLOOM REPORT 2024



77th North Carolina Azalea Festival
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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.

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 our river-to-the-sea community.



IMPACT

In 2011 the University of North Carolina Wilmington performed an economic impact on the effects the Azalea Festival has on our community. Results came back with an **over \$50 million economic impact** for our region annually. We also boast a **volunteer corp of over 1,000** (our #festivalfamily) who work tirelessly each year to ensure the best events and experiences for our guests.

FESTIVAL FAMILY

The Festival would not be possible without the contributions of dedicated community members, including:

- 5 Board Members
- 3 Year-Round Staff Members
- 6 Part-Time Seasonal Staff Members
- 131 Chair/Co-Chair Leaders
- 30 Emeritus Volunteers
- 1,000+ Volunteers
- 15 Youth Committee Members
- 5 Interns



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



Carrie
Underwood, 2006



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



Queen Azalea
Debra Paget
and Ronald
Reagan, 1959





THE MORE YOU KNOW

FESTIVAL EVENTS

Aces for Azaleas Volleyball & Cornhole Tournament - Airlie Luncheon Garden Party - Art Unveiling
Azalea Sun Run - Azalea Sweep - Battleship Boom & Bloom Fireworks Bonanza - Boxing Tournament
Brigade Boys & Girls Club Visit - Celebrity Reception - Chefs' Showcase - Concert Series
Fashion Show - Fireworks Show - Festival Press Conference - Golf Classic - Hospital Visit
Jingle in the Park with Cape Fear Volunteer Center - Mini Golf Party with the Alex Highsmith Family Foundation
Parade - Parade Reviewing Stand - Past Presidents' Party - Patrons' Party Gala - Performing Arts Stage
Pet Royalty Photo Contest with paws4people® - Queen's Coronation - Queen's Dance Party
Scholarship Princess Pageant - School Visit - Street Fair - Tunes & Blooms



FESTIVAL ASSOCIATED EVENTS*

After Garden Get Down with *LM Restaurants*
Coin Show with the *Lower Cape Fear Coin Club*
Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour and Ribbon Cutting © with the *Cape Fear Garden Club*
Juried Art Show and Sale with the *Wilmington Art Association*
Historic Wilmington Home Tour with the *Historic Wilmington Foundation*
Beauty & The Beast with *Thalian Association Community Theatre*
Cape Fear's Celebration of African American Arts and Culture with the *Delta Foundation*

*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.



THE MORE YOU KNOW

FESTIVAL PROGRAMMING

Azalea Festival Youth Committee - Queen's Court & Cadet Escorts - Festival Fun Guide
International Blooms Diversity & Inclusion - Middle School Writing Contest
Jean A. Lawler Emeritus Program Past Presidents' Program - Pin Pal Program - Veteran Groups
Volunteer Appreciation - Volunteer Recruitment - Youth Art Contest

SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVE

The North Carolina Azalea Festival is taking major steps **to prioritize sustainability efforts** at one of our signature events, the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party. Working with partners A New Earth Project, an initiative of Atlantic Packaging, UNC-Wilmington Office of Sustainability, Wilmington Composting Company, and Wall Recycling, a comprehensive waste management plan includes a trained group of volunteers to aid in directing event attendees on proper waste disposal which replaces single use items with compostable items including compostable plates, cups, food containers, and cutlery. Additional efforts included switching all drinks to aluminum cans, and even the wristbands, credentials, badges, and the lanyards were compostable.

Through these such changes to the event, the Azalea Festival was able to make a significant impact by **diverting .97 ton of waste to compost, 1.37 tons to recycling, and only producing .54 tons of trash.**

At past Garden Parties, trash would sometimes equate to 4-5 tons, so this is a huge improvement!

DEI INITIATIVE - INTERNATIONAL BLOOMS

The North Carolina Azalea Festival continues to make intentional efforts to be inclusive and share our region's rich cultural heritage. Through the International Blooms Program, the Festival chooses one country to highlight each year which will be in the spotlight at various Festival events through special musical and dance performances, invited guests and groups representing the country, food and art displays, and more. Thanks in part to the support of nCino, and Cape Fear Community College, the Philippines were showcased at the Parade, Street Fair, Performing Arts Stage, Fashion Show, AFYC and Festival Committee meetings, the Festival Press Conference, and more!





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.

\$153,216

MEDIA VALUE

\$15,000

Radio Buys

\$10,000

Cable and Network TV Buys

\$41,000

Digital Buys

\$2,500

Print Buys

\$84,716

Estimated Total Trade Media





MEDIA RELATIONS

IN THE NEWS



Photo courtesy of stoicks / iStock / Getty Images Plus

No. 5: North Carolina Azalea Festival - Wilmington, North Carolina

Colorful history: Highlights from 77 years of Wilmington's N.C. Azalea Festival



John Staton
Wilmington StarNews

Published 9:02 a.m. ET March 28, 2024 | Updated 9:02 a.m. ET March 28, 2024

From the editor: Celebrating the fun and fanfare of the North Carolina Azalea Festival



Sherry Jones
Wilmington StarNews

Published 9:02 a.m. ET April 7, 2024 | Updated 9:59 a.m. ET April 7, 2024

77th Annual NC Azalea Festival to feature concerts, parade, street fair, fireworks and more



The 2024 NC Azalea Festival in downtown Wilmington. (WECT)

By WECT Staff

Published: Mar. 25, 2024 at 3:19 PM EDT

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WILMINGTON, N.C. (WECT) — The 77th Annual NC Azalea Festival will feature concerts, a parade, a street fair, fireworks, art and more from April 3 to 7 in Wilmington, North Carolina.

While the festival officially runs from April 3-7, some events start even earlier.

North Carolina Azalea Festival wraps up in Wilmington

Updated: Mar. 8, 2024 at 8:11 AM EDT

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ANNUAL AZALEA FESTIVAL WRAPS UP

WECT 6



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.

973,470

WEBSITE PAGEVIEWS
www.ncazaleafestival.org
(April 23, 2023 - April 23, 2024)

446,533

EMAILS OPENED
(August 23, 2023- August 23, 2024)

310,717

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

37,960

EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

65,015

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, 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 **37.8% e-mail open rate for "Here's the Dirt."**

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**.



MARKETING OUTREACH

INFLUENCERS

New in 2024 the Azalea Festival worked with paid social media influencers to help spread the Festival spirit across North Carolina.

Lauren Suitcase, an East Coast based travel, adventure, and lifestyle influencer based in Wilmington, attended the Festival Fashion Show, Concert, and Tunes & Blooms event while also promoting Festival merch.

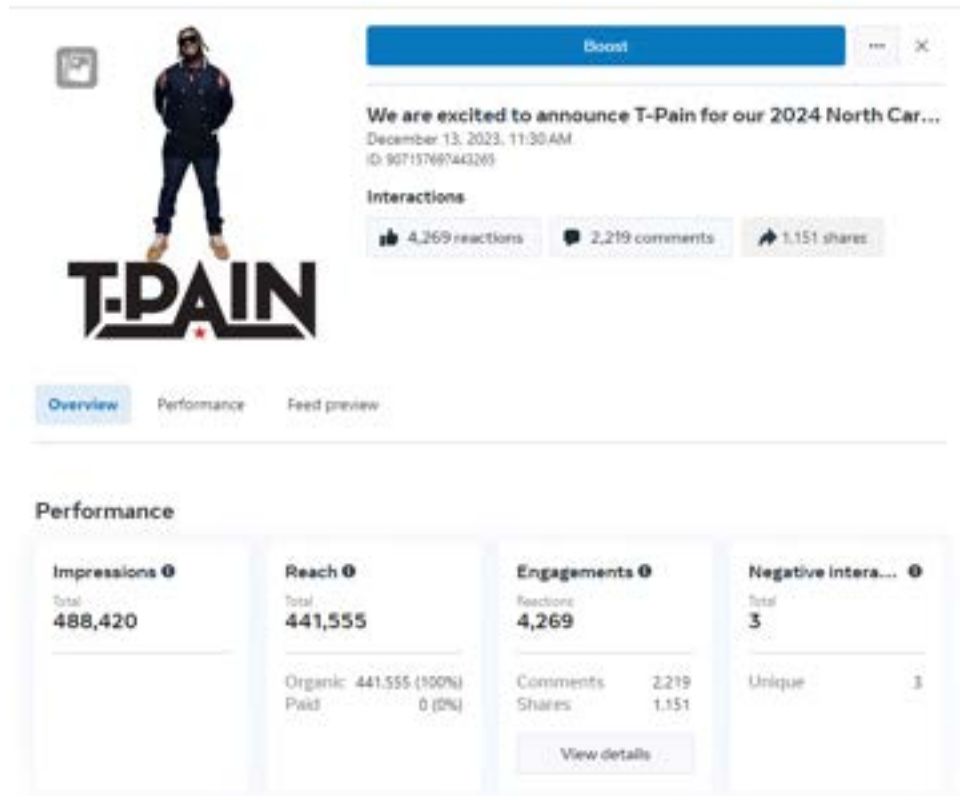
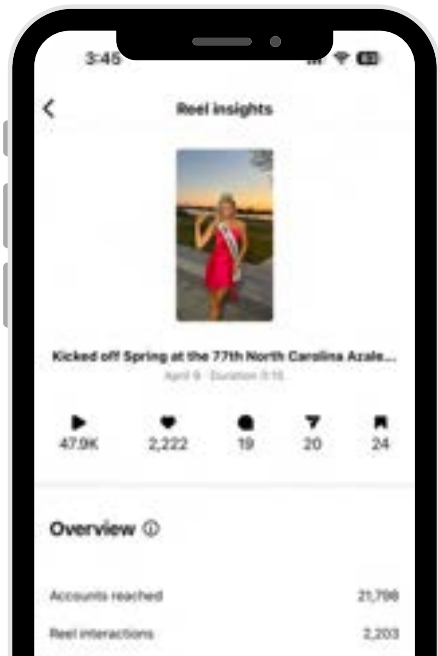


Jensen Savannah is a social media content creator that showcases the best of the the Carolinas, based out of Charlotte. She promoted the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party and Festival Patron Packages, while attending the Garden Party.



MARKETING OUTREACH

ANALYTICS



Social Media | T-Pain Announcement post on FB: Reach of 441,555
E-Marketing | March Here's the Dirt: 48.26% open rate with 25,439 delivered, 285 clicks and over \$8,000 in revenue clicks





SEEDS OF TOMORROW

FESTIVAL VISION AND STRATEGIC PLAN

Every non-profit needs a good vision and strategic plan to ensure **proper growth** and **stability**. Our current vision was created as a three year plan for the 2024 Festival through the 2026 Festival.

VISION

In our continuous effort to be a nationally recognized, signature North Carolina event, the North Carolina Azalea Festival strives to create an increasing portfolio of events that welcome our diverse and ever-growing community while showcasing our rich local culture and history.





2024 PLANTINGS

OUR PROGRESS

Check out just some of the progress we made in 2024 to achieve our Vision...

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our **International Blooms** program grew exponentially this year with the support of the Filipino American Association of the Lower Cape Fear and our Title Sponsor: nCino.

Cape Fear Community College partnered with the Festival this year to build a float to represent the Philippines.

North Carolina Representative Maria Cervania attended the Festival to honor her Filipino heritage.



New Partnerships

We welcomed the **US Army** as a proud new Major Sponsor of the Festival, supporting our community through their support as the Parade Title Sponsor.

We welcomed **New Hanover County** as a new Major Sponsor of the Festival. Though we've had many years of support from the County, we were glad to formalize our partnership in 2024.

More Progress

The Festival is proud to have worked with over **20 different non-profits** to help support their missions.

The Festival held a **downtown business Q&A** with the help of **WDI** to help spread Festival information and address citizen feedback.





2024 PLANTINGS

NEW IN 2024!

With **77 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 2024 Festival year!



New Events

Aces for Azaleas Volleyball & Cornhole Tournament

We took it to the sand at Capt'n Bill's.

Got It From My Momma Live Podcast Event

Our first ever LIVE national podcast taping.

Boom & Bloom Fireworks Bonanza

An event in partnership with the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA.

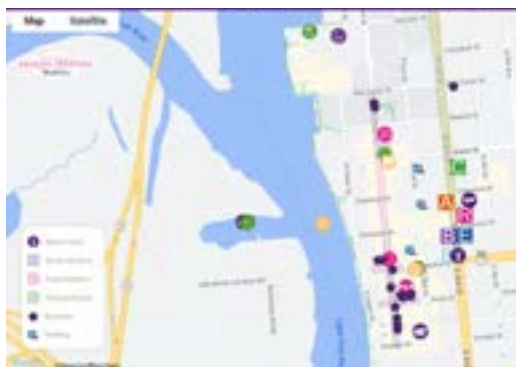
New Merchandise

Beach & Barn

Partnership with favorite LOCAL merch line.

Kids Making It

Partnership to support local non-profit.



New Programming

Pet Royalty Court Photo Contest

Partnership to support local non-profit, paws4people®.

Digital Festival Fun Guide

A new way to display Festival events.

Azalea Alley

A new activity zone and beer garden at the Street Fair.



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, Hawthorne Residential Partners, LM Restaurants Family of Brands, South State Bank

BENEFACTOR SPONSORS: InOutsource, NC Ports, North Carolina Education Lottery, Sunbelt Rentals, UNCW

GABLE EVENT SPONSORS: Business Growers, GriffinEstep Benefit Group, Michael & Russell PLLC, Wells Fargo, Wilmington Eye, Wilmington Grill, Embassy Suites by Hilton Wilmington Riverfront, Horton & Mendez, nCino, Paula & Albert Corbett, Perry's Emporium, REV Federal Credit Union, River Landing, Truist, Wells Fargo, Wilmington Eye, Wilmington Grill

DONOR SPONSORS: Bitty & Beau's Coffee, Cape Fear Public Utility Authority, Cardinal Point East Group at Morgan Stanley, Catalyst Clinical Research, Coca-Cola, Corning Incorporated, Duke Energy, Prestige Beverage Group, Samet Corporation, Total Wine & More, United Bank, Wilmington Convention Center, WWAY

EVERGREEN EVENT SPONSORS: Battleship NORTH CAROLINA, Bob King Buick/GMC, Burney & Jones, PLLC, California Closets, Capital Vacations, Captrust, Cellular Sales, Community Foundation of NC East, Cottages at Riverlights, Deuterman Law Group, First Carolina Bank, Jungle Rapids, Liberty Healthcare, Living by the Coast Realty, Lumina Gem, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Reeds Jewelers, Renewal by Andersen, Sheetz, Southeast Foundation and Crawl Space Repair, T-Mobile, Trial Management Associates, Trillium, UNCW, US Foods, Wilmington Grill, Wilmington International Airport, Wyndham Destinations

PATRON SPONSORS: 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. In 2024 the Festival had 236 Patrons.

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



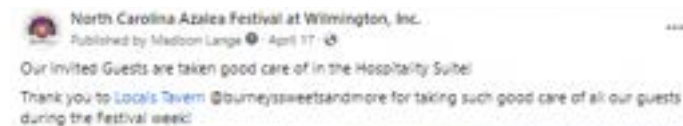
FESTIVAL SUPPORTERS

SPONSOR RECOGNITION

Onsite Recognition



Social Media Recognition



E-mail Footer (All Marketing E-mails)

Website Home Page

Sponsor Page Footer





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...

Aperol

Aperol was a new sponsor at the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party that brought that bright pop of color to the event...and introduced us to our new favorite drink, the Aperol Spritz!



Battleship North Carolina

In partnership with new sponsor, the Battleship NORTH CAROLINA, we created a brand new Festival event, the Boom & Bloom Fireworks Bonanza which SOLD OUT its first year!



REV Federal Credit Union

REV Federal Credit Union joined us new this year as the Title sponsor of the Spring Fashion Show, bringing with them cute makeup bags for attendees and a partnership with Operation Pretty Things, a non-profit focused on raising awareness of domestic violence.

Sheetz

Sheetz came into town strong, helping support multiple Festival events including the Street Fair, Parade, and Azalea Sweep.

UNCW

Though UNCW has been a supporter for many years, they added to their sponsorship in 2024 to start a new Festival event during UNCW Homecoming week, the Azalea Seahawk Sun Run.

Novant Health

Novant Health increased their sponsorship and added new community outreach efforts during Azalea Festival weekend, including a mobile Community Care Cruiser and a baby care tent - all free for the public.





Thank You