



THE BLOOM REPORT 2025



78th 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.

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
- 4 Year-Round Staff Members
- 5 Part-Time Seasonal Staff Members
- 187 Chair/Co-Chair Leaders
- 74 Committees
- 25 Emeritus Volunteers
- 1,000+ Volunteers
- 21 Youth Committee Members
- 6 Interns



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



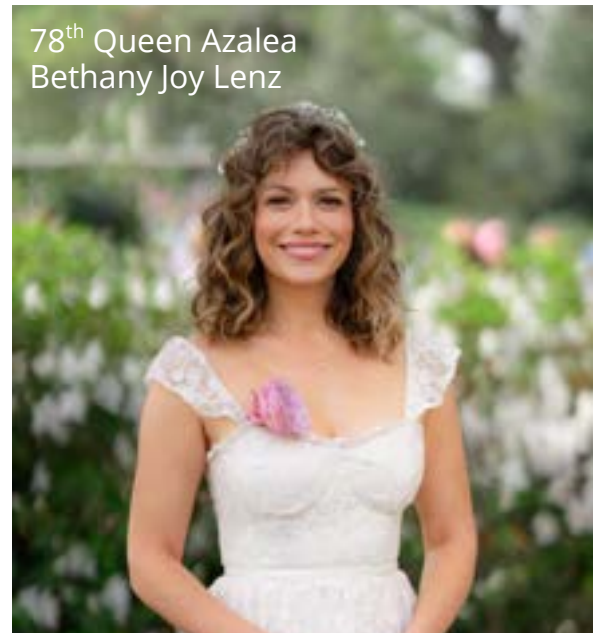
Snoop Dogg,
2016



The Avett Brothers,
2021



78th Queen Azalea
Bethany Joy Lenz



46th Queen Azalea
Kelly Ripa



Ronald Reagan & Queen
Azalea Debra Paget,
1959



Carrie Underwood,
2006





THE MORE YOU KNOW

FESTIVAL EVENTS

Aces for Azaleas Volleyball Tournament - Airlie Luncheon Garden Party - Art Unveiling
 Azalea Seahawk 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 on the Battleship 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 Multicultural Stage
 Pet Royalty Photo Contest with paws4people® - Pageant People's Choice Contest - 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*
 Mary Poppins 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 - 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 steps **to prioritize sustainability efforts** at one of our signature events, the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party. Working with partners 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.

Through these such changes to the event, the Azalea Festival was able to make a significant impact by **diverting .85 tons of waste to compost, 1.45 tons to recycling, and only producing 1.82 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, Nigerian culture was showcased at the Chefs' Showcase, Parade, Street Fair, Performing Arts Stage, Fashion Show, the Patrons' Gala, Festival Committee meetings, 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.

\$173,721

MEDIA VALUE

\$16,120

Radio Buys

\$10,000

Cable and Network TV Buys

\$40,959

Digital Buys

\$1,372

Print Buys

\$105,270

Estimated Total Trade Media





MEDIA RELATIONS

IN THE NEWS

Wilmington

WVAY 9 **DEALS** SHOP LOCAL BUY LOCAL SAVE

NEWS • MORE NEWS • WEATHER • SPORTS • COMMUNITY • VIDEO • TV • BIG DEAL

"One Tree Hill" star Bethany Joy Lenz named 2025 Queen Azalea

February 27, 2025 By WISN News

LOCAL

NC Azalea Festival Parade: Here's what to know about parking, the parade route and more

Cheryl M. Whitaker
Wilmington StarNews

Updated April 4, 2025, 11:25 a.m. ET

Facebook X Email Share

64 Photos VIEW GALLERY

NC Azalea Festival's Celebrity Reception

Guests for the N.C. Azalea Festival were greeted at Cape Fear Country Club on Thursday, April 3.

Everything you need to know about the 78th annual NC Azalea Festival in Wilmington

John Staton
Wilmington StarNews

March 24, 2025 · Updated March 25, 2025, 4:22 p.m. ET

LOCAL

Preparing for the NC Azalea Festival in downtown Wilmington

Owen Hassell

April 3, 2025 · Updated April 4, 2025, 12:47 p.m. ET

LOCAL

15 must-do things during the N.C. Azalea Festival in Wilmington

March 17, 2025, 5:00 a.m. ET



▶

Tar Heel Traveler: North Carolina Azalea Festival

The North Carolina Azalea Festival is underway in Wilmington. Scott Mason and the WRAL Tar Heel Traveler share how this festival blossomed into a major event.



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.

633,649

WEBSITE PAGEVIEWS
www.ncazaleafestival.org
(April 17, 2024 - April 17, 2025)

192,263

EMAILS OPENED
(April 17, 2024 - April 17, 2025)

206,054

WEBSITE USERS
www.ncazaleafestival.org
(April 17, 2024 - April 17, 2025)

36,623

EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

72,115

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 **37.2% 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

In 2025 the Azalea Festival worked with paid social media influencers to help spread the Festival spirit across North Carolina.

Laurens Suitcase, an East Coast based travel, adventure, and lifestyle influencer based in Wilmington, attended the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party, Concerts, and Tunes & Blooms event while also promoting Festival merch.

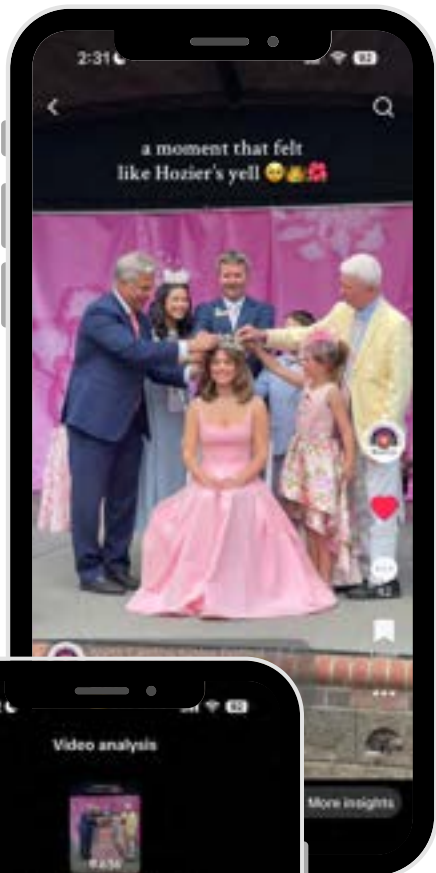


Jensen Savannah is a social media content creator that showcases the best of the the Carolinas, based out of Charlotte. She promoted the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party and Festival Patron Packages, while attending the Garden Party.



MARKETING OUTREACH

ANALYTICS



Boost

🌸🌟 We're thrilled to announce this year's Queen Azalea
February 27, 2025, 10:00 AM
ID: 1184746529684379

Interactions

👍 5,057 reactions 💬 575 comments ➦ 299 shares

Overview Performance Feed preview

Performance

Overview

Views ⓘ	Reach ⓘ	Interactions ⓘ	Link clicks ⓘ
618,624	420,771	4,441	1,132

Social Media | Queen Azalea Announcement post on FB: Reach of 420,771
E-Marketing | February Here's the Dirt: 46.4% open rate with 25,452 delivered, 197 clicks and over \$2,870 in revenue clicks

HERE'S THE DIRT!
Featuring **JUSTIN MOORE**

WHAT'S NEW?

Welcome to Wilmington, Justin Moore!
(Thursday, April 10th, 2025)

Justin Moore is the official headliner for this year's Thursday night concert, with opening act Jameson Ray/Levi's WRB music platinum hits such as "This Is



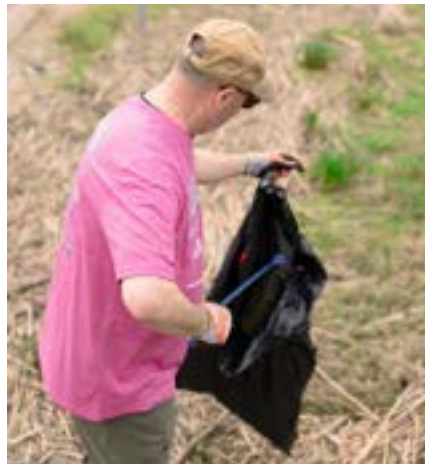
SEEDS OF TOMORROW

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.





BUDS IN BLOOM

ORGANIZATIONS AND NON-PROFITS

The Festival is proud to highlight, showcase, or partner with over 40 community organizations in efforts to help support their missions.

501 Legion - Alex Highsmith Family Foundation - Aurora Fossil Museum

Big Buddy/Cape Fear Volunteer Center - Bikers Against Child Abuse - Brooklyn Music Arts Academy

Canines for Service - Cape Fear Community College - Cape Fear Garden Club - Cape Fear Jeeps

Central & West Rotary - Children's Museum - Coastal Horizons - Code Ninjas - Colgate Children's Van

Downtown Business Alliance - Delta Foundation of the Cape Fear - Dreams of Wilmington - GLOW Historic

Wilmington Foundation - Isaac Bear Science Students - Jack & Jill of America - Kids Making It

Kind Behavioral Health - LGBTQ Center of the Cape Fear Coast - Lower Cape Fear Historical Society Operation

Pretty Things - paws4people®- Pop Warner - Residents of Downtown Wilmington - School of Rock

Shine Your Light Singers - Southport Lions Club- Stonewall Sports - Thalian Association Community Theatre

UNCW Annual Giving - UNCW Athletics- UNCW Greek Life - UNCW Women's Basketball

Wilmington Apartment Association - Wilmington Downtown, Inc. - Wilmington Fire Department

Wilmington Performing Arts - Young Scientists Academy





2025 PLANTINGS

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Our **International Blooms** program grew this year with the support of Coastal Interiorscapes working in partnership with CFCC to build this year's float representing Nigeria.

Liberty & Plenty was welcomed this year as a new Major Sponsor! Liberty & Plenty is a 100% woman-owned craft distillery with a bedrock of vision, gratitude, purpose and aspiration, and with curiosity as its heartbeat.



New Partnerships

We welcomed **Grind With Gratitude** as a proud new Glen Dale Sponsor of the Festival, introducing the first THC drink at the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party!

We welcomed **The Endowment** as a new Evergreen Sponsor of the Festival. The Endowment brought their team and their support to this year's Azalea Sweep, and played a huge role in the beautification of Wilmington!

The Festival recently joined the **Downtown Business Alliance (DBA)** to help strengthen our relationship with local small businesses around the Downtown area.

New in 2025 was the **Aviation Static Display**, held at ILM International Airport! This was a free event, where guests were invited to view various types of aircraft up close and personal.





2025 PLANTINGS

MORE PROGRESS...

With **78 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 2025 Festival year!



New Events

Azalea Golf Classic

We took it to the green this year at River Landing at the first annual Azalea Golf Classic!

Perry's Emporium Boom & Bloom VIP Area

Thanks to Perry's Emporium, we introduced our first ever VIP Area at Battleship Boom & Bloom Fireworks Bonanza.

New Merchandise

Beach & Barn

We partnered with Beach & Barn again in 2025 as the OFFICIAL apparel sponsor of the Festival.

Kids Making It

In partnership with Kids Making It, we debuted some new, one-of-a-kind items in 2025!



New Programming

McKinley Lanier Scholarship Award

A new scholarship introduced at this year's Scholarship Pageant to a contestant who completed the most community service hours, named after past Princess and Festival volunteer, McKinley Lanier.

Scholarship Pageant People's Choice Contest

A new contest involving all contestants of the Scholarship Pageant. This contest acts as a scholarship fundraiser, and in its inaugural year raised \$18,500.



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: Aperol, Casamigos, Embassy Suites by Hilton Wilmington Riverfront, Grind with Gratitude, Hawthorne Residential Partners, LM Restaurants Family of Brands, South State Bank

BENEFACTOR SPONSORS: Duke Energy, NC Ports, Sunbelt Rentals, UNCW

GABLE EVENT SPONSORS: Active Entertainment, Dr. Sarah Pless, DDS: Renaissance Dental Studio, Live Nation Premium Experiences, Michael & Russell, PLLC, nCino, Paula & Albert Corbett, Perry's Emporium, REV Federal Credit Union, River Landing, Sea Scape Properties, Sheetz, Truist, Verizon Business, Wells Fargo, Wilmington Eye, Wilmington Grill

DONOR SPONSORS: Catalyst Clinical Research, Civil Works Contracting LLC, Coca-Cola, Corning Incorporated, Prestige Beverage Group, Samet Corporation, Total Wine & More, TowneBank Mortgage, United Bank, Wilmington Convention Center, WWAY

EVERGREEN EVENT SPONSORS: All American Gutter Protection, Atlantic Union Bank, Battleship NORTH CAROLINA, Beach & Barn, Business Growers, California Closets, Capital Vacations, Community Foundation of NC East, End of Days Distillery, First Carolina Bank, GriffinEstep Benefit Group, Horton & Mendez, Industrial Cleaning Equipment, Jungle Rapids, Liberty Health, Living by the Coast, Lumina Gem, Metronet, Monarch Roofing, Nothing Bundt Cakes, Passanante's Home Food Service, Pella Windows and Doors, Recharged IV, REEDS Jewelers, Renewal by Andersen, Ryan Homes, Sellers Tile Co, T-Mobile, TD Bank, The Endowment, Travel + Leisure Resort Development, Inc., Trillium, UNCW, Wilmington Grill, Wilmington International Airport

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 2025 the Festival had 252 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. This year was extra special, as for the first time in Festival history, we surpassed **\$1,000,000** in sponsorships. Take a peek at just a few of our favorites from this year!

Casamigos

Casamigos was a new sponsor at the Airlie Luncheon Garden Party in 2025, boasting their brand name using stunning marquee letters and beautiful floral displays!



Embassy Suites by Hilton Wilmington Riverfront

Embassy Suites proudly hosted our fan-favorite Spring Fashion Show this year! We're incredibly grateful for their key role in making this event a success.



First Carolina Bank

First Carolina Bank is the official title sponsor of our post-Festival event, the Aces for Azaleas Volleyball Tournament! Their team has been incredibly supportive, helping make this event a success year after year!

Atlantic Union Bank

This year, we welcomed Atlantic Union Bank as the title sponsor of Jingle on the Battleship, one of our Festival holiday events! We were thrilled to have the Atlantic Union Bank team join the Festival family!

GriffinEstep Benefit Group

GriffinEstep Benefit Group has been a longtime Festival sponsor, and this year we were excited to welcome them as the title sponsor of our online Pet Royalty Photo Contest, as well as a Host Sponsor of the Chefs' Showcase!



Sea Scape Properties

Sea Scape Properties joined us this year as a Festival Parade Diamond Sponsor! If you attended the Parade, you likely spotted their logo on signage and their fantastic float!





Thank You

