

Volunteer-Based Festivals & How to Get Them All Shook Up!

TOM HARRISON





The Wildly Successful!

National Black Bear Festival

2015 Best New Festival in NC

2016 NC Event of the Year

2017 Best Small Festival in the Southeast

2018 NC Event of the Year

2020 NC Virtual Event of the Year

2022 Best Festival in the Southeast

2024 Best Festival in the Southeast
Runner-Up

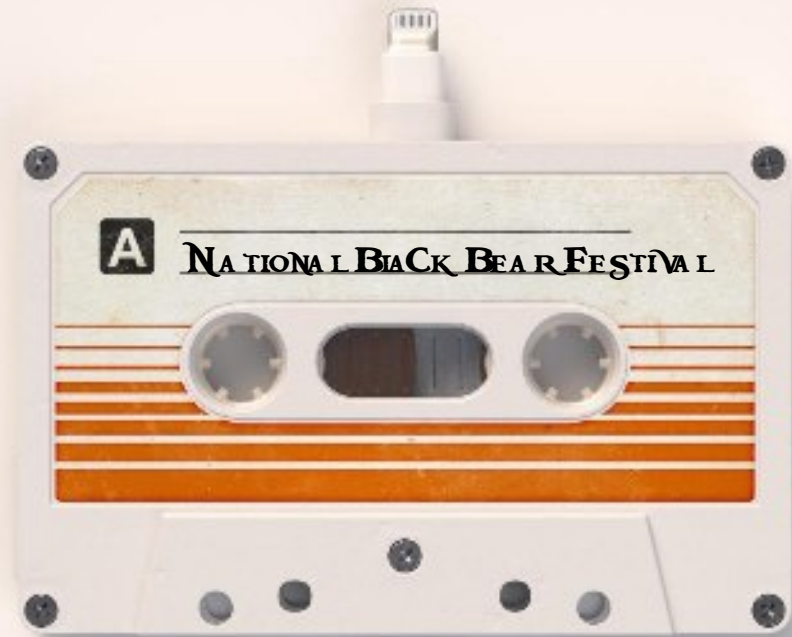


NationalBearFest.com 252-793-6627 Email: Director@NationalBearFest.com



Why Volunteers Matter

- **You can't have a festival without them**
- **Reduces Staffing Costs**
- **Strengths Community Engagement**
- **Improves Guest Experience**
- **Provides Extra Layer of Safety**



The Volunteer 5-R's

- **Recruitment**
- **Rehearsal**
- **Recognition**
- **Retention**
- **Repeat**

Recruitment

CIVIC GROUPS

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

BOY SCOUTS

ROTARY, KIWANAS, SHINERS, ETC.

CHURCHES

ASK A GIVEN CHURCH TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE ASPECT OF YOUR EVENT, INCLUDING RECRUITMENT, TRAINING AND SCHEDULING

SENIOR CENTERS

RETIREES FROM ANY SOURCE ARE A GREAT RESOURCE. MATCH THEM WITH THEIR SKILL SET.

COLLEGE & SCHOOLS

ROTC, CHEERLEADERS, BAND, DRAMA CLUB

WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

POST ENTICING OPPORTUNITIES.
MAKE SIGN UP EASY!

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARDS

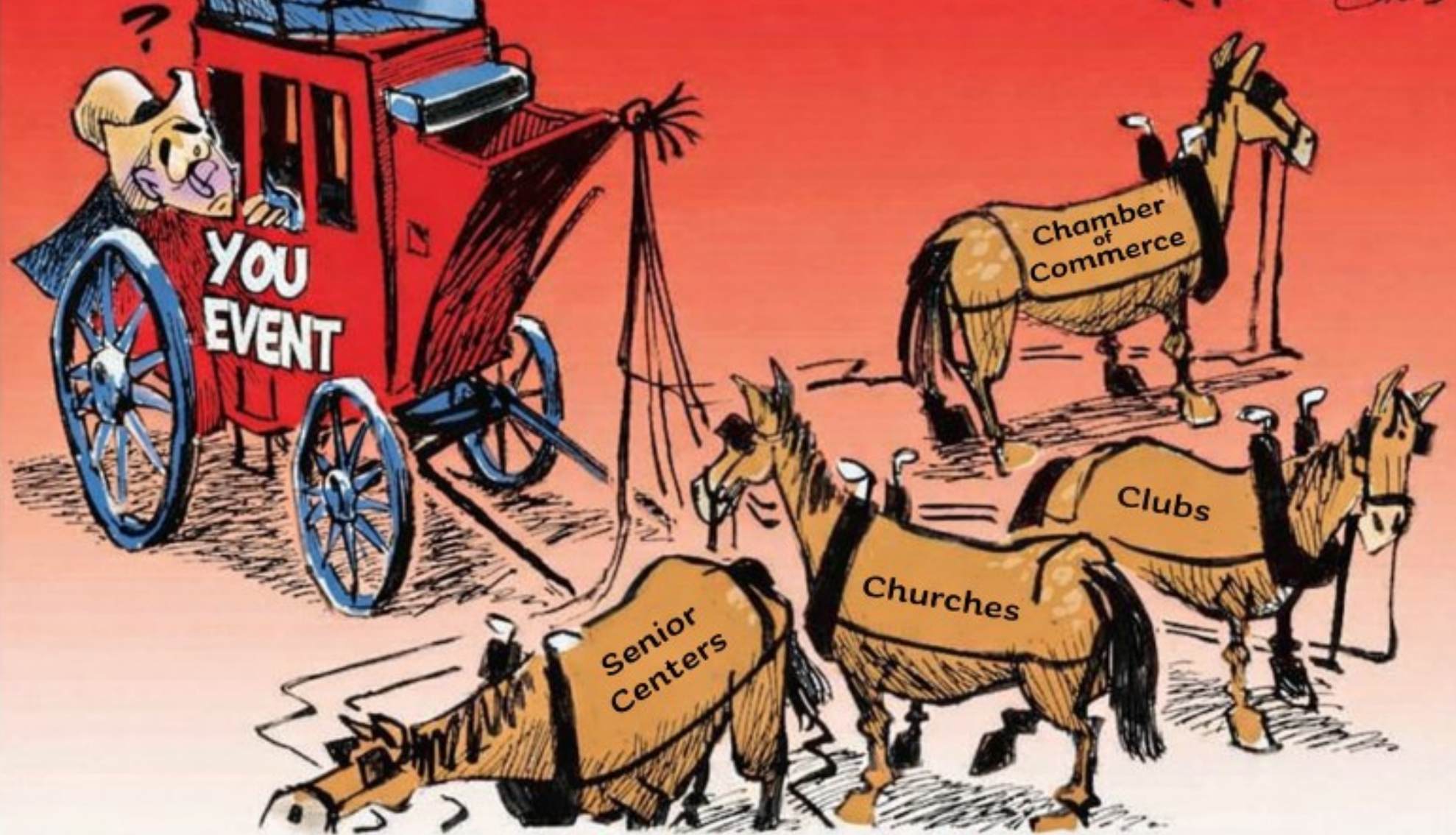
COMMUNITY BOARDS AT CAFES, GOVERNMENT OFFICES, ETC.

6/15/XX

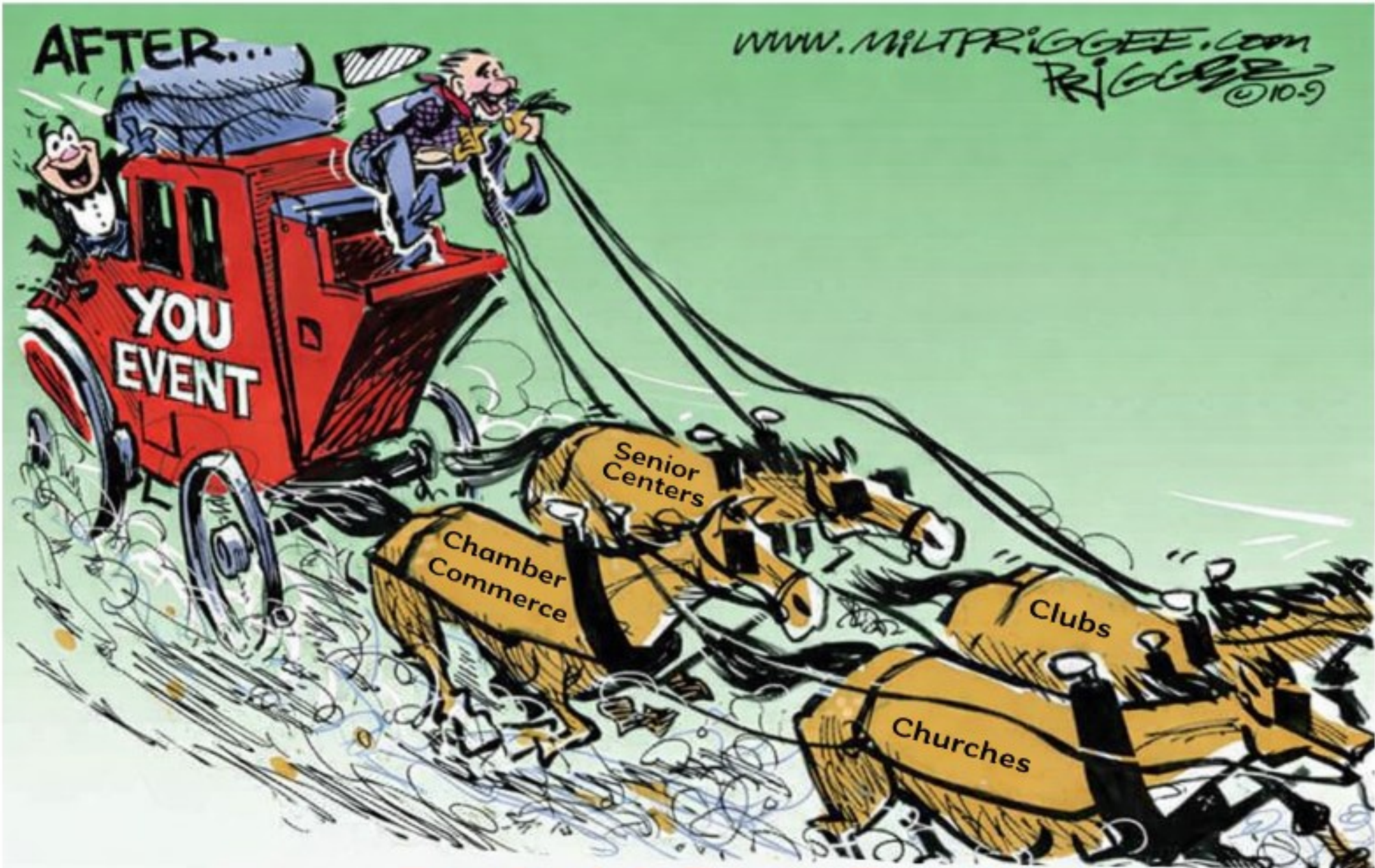


BEFORE ...

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Festival & Event Express



Festival & Event Express

Run with the Bear 5K



ORGANIZED
BY THE
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

Bear Necessities Paddle



ORGANIZED
BY THE
CHAMBER
OF
COMMERCE

Papa Bear Car Show



ORGANIZED
BY
THE
CIVITANS



Civitan On The Pamlico

Obstacle Course & Driving Course



ORGANIZED
BY THE
VFW



Waterfront



**YOUTH
ORGANIZATION
MANAGES OUR
WATERFRONT:
PONTON BOAT
RIDES
KAYAK RENTAL
LAZY RIVER
TUBING**

Other Examples:

The DAR runs our **Black Bear Theater**

US Marine Veterans run our **Poker Run**

Church of Christ runs our **Waterslides**

Baptist Church runs our **Information Booth**



Rehearsal (Training)

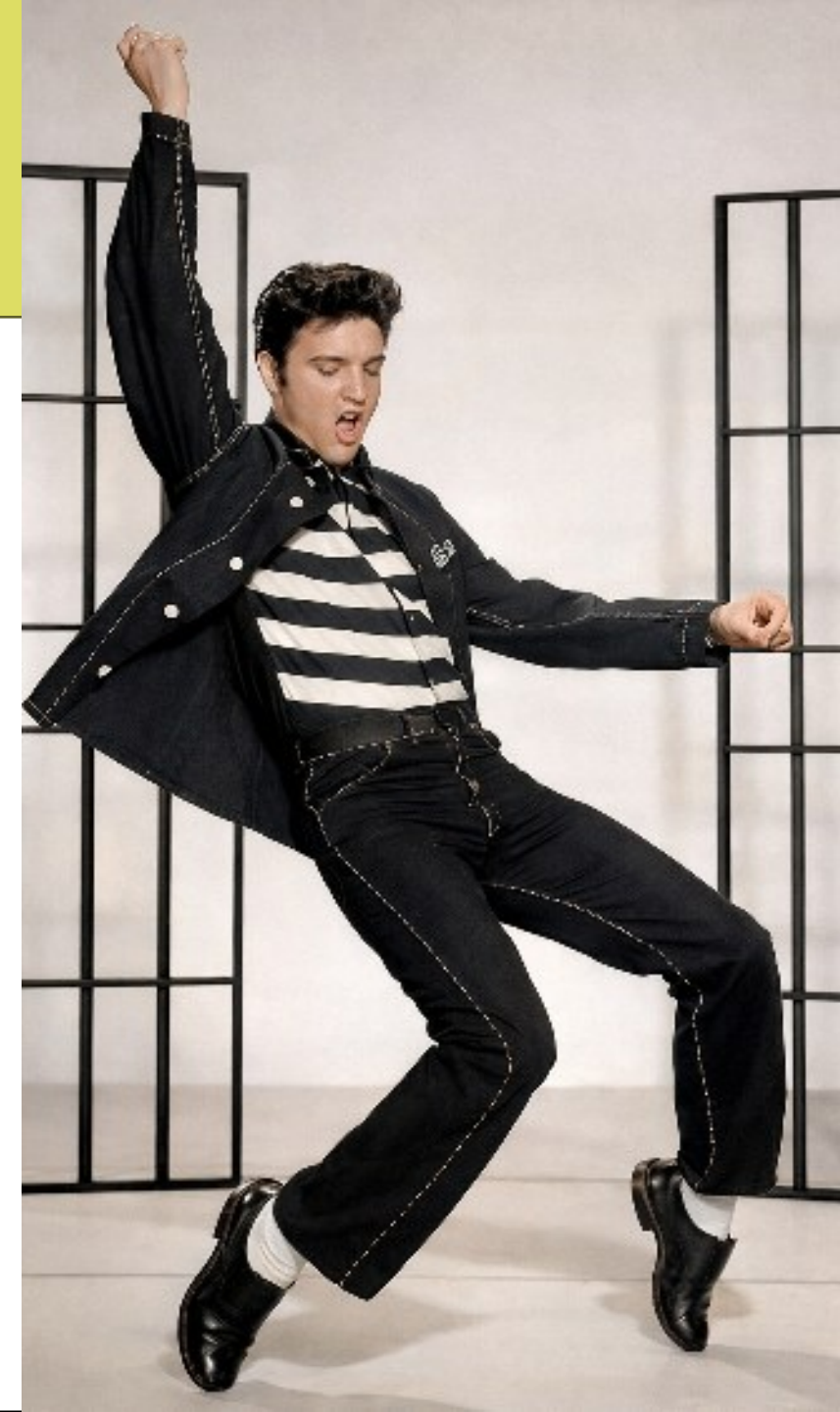
TRAINING REDUCES CONFUSION &
INCREASES PROFESSIONALISM

ONLINE
ORIENTATION

VOLUNTEER
HANDBOOK

CLARIFY
COMMUNICATION
CHANNELS

CREATE
FAQ'S
SAFETY &
EMERGENCY
PROTOCOLS



2025 Volunteer Schedule

<u>Day</u>	<u>Shift</u>	<u>Volunteer name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>S-Size</u>	<u>Phone #</u>
Hospitality House					
Friday	4:00 6:00	Shannon Sanderlin	Parrish House	M	XXX-XX-XXXX
Friday	6:00 8:00	Shannon Sanderlin	Parrish House	M	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	8:00 11:00	Joanne Barwood	Parrish House	2-XL	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	11:00 2:00	Ann Keys	Parrish House	M	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	2:00 5:00	Sandy Stotesberry	Parrish House	L	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	5:00 8:00	Shannon Sanderlin	Parrish House	L	XXX-XX-XXXX
Mechanical Bear					
Saturday	9:00 1:00 Tickets	Janet	Across from POP	L	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	9:00 1:00 Tickets	Kayla Hollowell	Across from POP	XL	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	9:00 1:00 Waiver	Fabian Vazquez	Across from POP	L	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	1:00 4:00 Tickets	Rachel/Rebecca Price	Across from POP	L	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	1:00 4:00 Waiver	Joanne Barwood	Across from POP	XL	XXX-XX-XXXX
Log Roll					
Saturday	9:00 1:00 Tickets	Janet	Across from POP	L	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	9:00 1:00 Tickets	Kayla Hollowell	Across from POP	XL	XXX-XX-XXXX
Saturday	9:00 1:00 Waiver	Fabian Vazquez	Across from POP	L	XXX-XX-XXXX
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Saturday	1:00 4:00 Waiver	Joanne Barwood	Across from POP	XL	XXX-XX-XXXX



CREATE A VOLUNTEER R FAQ (ONLINE AND PRINTED)

Volunteer FAQ

Initial Contact

- What kinds of volunteer roles are available?
- Will I receive training?
- How long are volunteer shifts?
- Can I sign up for more than one shift?
- Do volunteers get free admission to the festival?
- Will I be working alone at my assigned venue?
- Can I choose where to volunteer or does the festival assign all spots?
- Are there heated/air-conditioned venues?
- How can I apply?
- What should I wear?
- What should I bring?

Logistics

- Am I allowed to bring family or friends?
- Will food or drinks be provided?
- Where are the restrooms for volunteers?
- Can I take breaks during my shift?
- Where should I park?
- What if I need to cancel or change shifts?
- What time should I arrive for my volunteer shift?
- Where do I check in when I arrive?
- What happens if there is severe weather?
- Who should I contact if an emergency occurs?
- Can I receive a volunteer certificate or service hours?

Welcome to the Festival Volunteer Team!

Thank you for donating your time and energy to help make our festival safe, fun, and memorable. Your commitment plays a vital role in creating a positive experience for every guest.

This handbook outlines what is expected of you — and what you can expect from leadership — so you feel prepared, supported, and valued. Volunteer handbooks help set clear expectations, build trust, and ensure everyone is working toward the same goal.

1. About the Festival & Your Role

Our Mission is....

Our festival exists to celebrate our community, culture, and shared experiences.

Volunteers are essential in helping us create a welcoming, safe, and well-organized event that reflects these values.

Why Volunteers Matter

Volunteers are the backbone of a successful festival. You help with:

- Event logistics
- Creating a positive atmosphere
- Improving guest experiences
- Adding a layer of safety

Your role enables the festival to run smoothly and ensures guests have an enjoyable experience.

2. TRAINING

WHY TRAINING MATTERS

Training ensures you feel confident and prepared. It provides the knowledge and skills needed to perform your duties effectively and safely. Proper training also clarifies expectations and minimizes confusion during the event.

TRAINING INCLUDES:

- Event overview and schedule
- Role-specific responsibilities
- Emergency procedures
- Guest interaction expectations
- How to report concerns or incidents

3. EXPECTATIONS

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

- **BE ON TIME**
Arrive at least 15 minutes before your shift begins so you are ready to start on time.
- **MAINTAIN A POSITIVE ATTITUDE**
Your enthusiasm sets the tone for guest experiences. Stay helpful, patient, and upbeat — even during busy periods.
- **UNDERSTAND YOUR ROLE**
Be familiar with your assigned area, including nearby tents, equipment, exits, first aid stations, and emergency locations.
- **WORK AS A TEAM**
Communicate clearly and cooperate with fellow volunteers and staff.
- **FOLLOW SAFETY PROTOCOLS**
Know and follow all safety guidelines. Immediately report hazards or concerns.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM LEADERSHIP:

- Clear role assignments and shift schedules
- Training and orientation designed to help you succeed
- Ongoing support and direction while on duty
- Accessible leadership for questions or emergencies

4. GUEST SERVICE & HANDLING DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

POSITIVE GUEST INTERACTION

- Greet guests warmly and courteously
- Provide directions or information when possible
- Politely direct questions to leadership you cannot answer

HANDLING UPSET GUESTS

If a guest is frustrated or upset:

- Listen without interrupting
- Remain calm and respectful
- Show empathy (“I understand how that feels.”)
- Involve a team leader if needed

SAFETY FIRST

Have phone numbers saved on your phone for emergency service providers onsite and festival leadership.

If a guest appears medically distressed, unsafe, or disruptive, contact appropriate emergency services and leadership immediately. Do not attempt to personally intervene in potentially dangerous situations.

5. SAFETY & INCIDENT REPORTING

SAFETY BASICS

- Know the location of Lost Child rendezvous location, first aid, water stations, exits, and shaded rest areas
- Do not operate equipment or enter restricted areas unless properly trained

REPORTING AN INCIDENT

If an incident occurs:

- Notify leadership or the volunteer coordinator immediately
- Provide clear details (who, what, where, when)
- Complete an incident report form if required

Clear reporting helps keep everyone safe.

6. GEOGRAPHIC FAMILIARITY & EQUIPMENT

Volunteers should be familiar with:

- The layout of the festival grounds
- The location of equipment and supplies
- Where your station's materials are stored

Being informed allows you to confidently assist guests and work efficiently.

7. TEAMWORK & COMMUNICATION

- Treat fellow volunteers and staff with respect
- Ask questions if unsure — do not guess
- Offer help if someone appears overwhelmed
- Keep walkways and work areas clear

Strong teamwork creates a positive environment for both volunteers and guests.

8. ATTENDANCE & SHIFTS

RELIABILITY

If you are unable to work your shift, notify the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible so coverage can be arranged.

SHIFT EXPECTATIONS

- Arrive early
- Take breaks as necessary
- Remain at your post until properly relieved

9. POLICIES & CONDUCT

Volunteers are expected to maintain professionalism at all times.

This includes:

- No alcohol or drug use while on duty
- Wearing appropriate festival attire
- Using respectful language and behavior
- Following leadership directions

Failure to adhere to these policies may result in removal from volunteer duties.

10. RECOGNITION & APPRECIATION

We value your time and dedication. As a thank-you, volunteers may receive:

- Free festival entry after completing shifts
- Volunteer merchandise or meals
- Public or social recognition

These gestures reflect our appreciation for your contribution.

CONCLUSION

By volunteering, you help create a safe, welcoming, and enjoyable environment for all festival attendees. We are grateful for your time, energy, and commitment — and we hope your experience is both rewarding and memorable.

Thank you for being an essential part of our festival community!



Inspiring Volunteers

CREATE EXCITEMENT

THEY ARE MORE APT
TO BE EXCITED IF
YOU ARE.

SHARE VOLUNTEER TESTIMONIALS

GIVE THEM OWNERSHIP

ASK FOR THEIR
INPUT AND
SUGGESTIONS,
PARTICULARLY DURING
AND AFTER THE EVENT.

SHARE BENEFITS

FREE PASSES
ENHANCE RESUME
GENERATE REFERENCES
SENSE OF BELONGING

HIGHLIGHT FUN & EXCLUSIVITY

Minimalist and easy to
use

Managing Volunteers – DO's

COMMUNICATE CLEARLY & FREQUENTLY

Before, During & After the Event

SCHEDULE TIME SLOTS

Manageable Hours. Offer Rotation.

PROVIDE BREAKS, WATER, MEALS AS NEEDED

If possible provide a break room

DURING THE EVENT ENCOURAGE AND PRAISE GOOD WORK

“At’a Boy!”



Managing Volunteers – DON'Ts

DON'T OVERWORK VOLUNTEERS

Look for signs of distress

DON'T LEAVE THEM WITHOUT GUIDANCE

DON'T IGNORE CONFLICTS

SHOW THEM KINDNESS & RESPECT

Employ the Golden Rule

DON'T TREAT THEM AS DISPOSABLE LABOR

DON'T IGNORE SAFETY ISSUES

Recognition

Recognition Goes Hand in Hand with Retention

DURING THE

AFTER THE

EVENT
VENDOR VOUCHERS

EVENT
SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

FREE TICKETS!

PERSONAL "THANK YOU"
MESSAGES

FREE MERCH VOUCHER

PROFIT SHARING

Retention

RETENTION IS CHEAPER & EASIER
THAN RECRUITING EACH YEAR

But How?

**HOST A PRE-EVENT
MEET-&-GREET.**



**MAKE THE EXPERIENCE
ENJOYABLE.** If it feels like a
chore, they won't come back

**CREATE A PRIVATE
FACEBOOK GROUP OR
EMAIL LIST.**

SHARE



T





PLAN A SIMPLE POST- EVENT CELEBRATION

HIGHLIGHT:
“VOLUNTEER OF THE
YEAR.”

ENCOURAGE
TEAM ASSIGNMENTS

The Inevitable Naughty List





*Now Go Out
and*



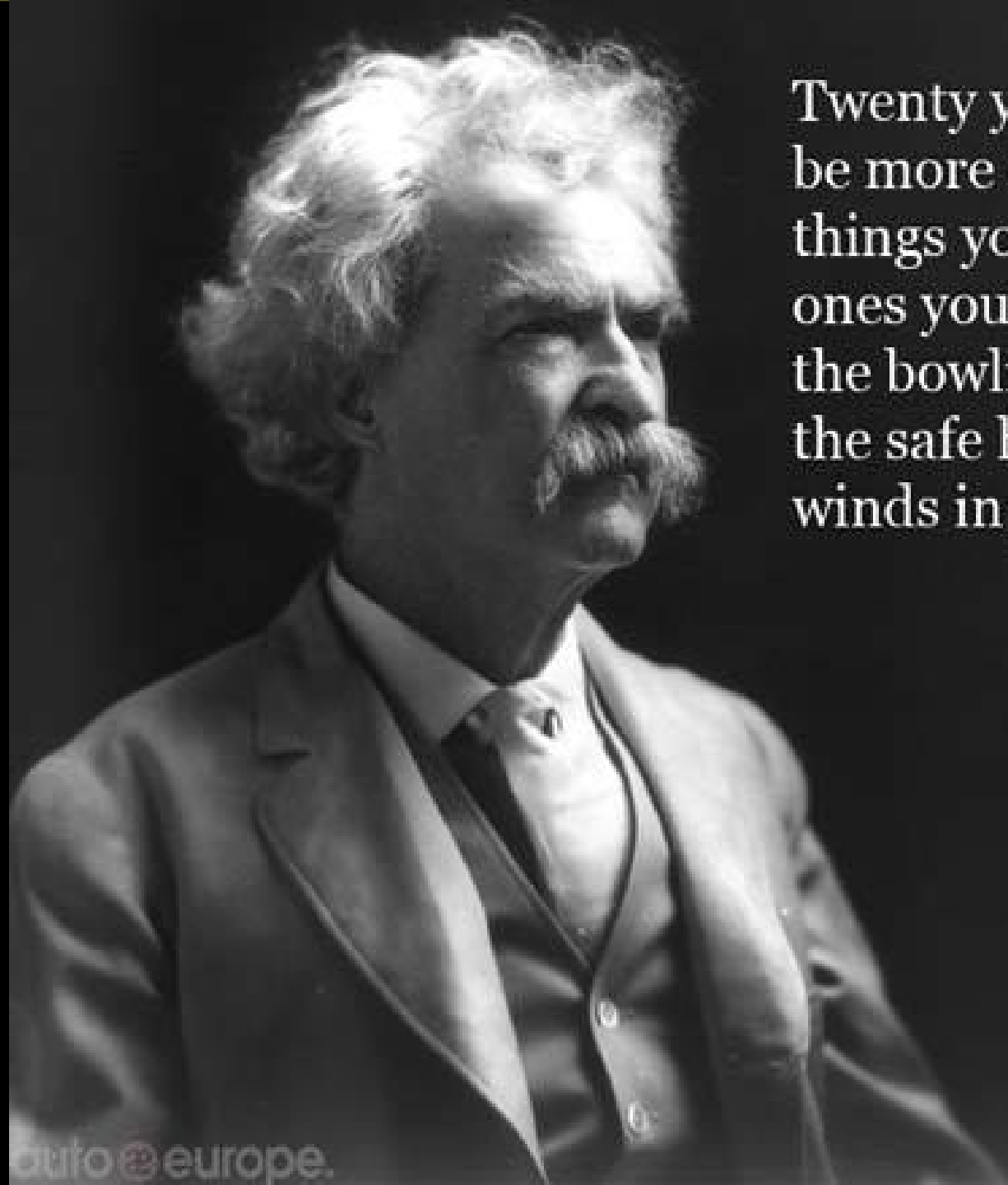
**CREATE A
FASCINATING
EXPERIENCE**



Nothing happens
unless first we dream.

Carl Sandburg

“quoteancy”



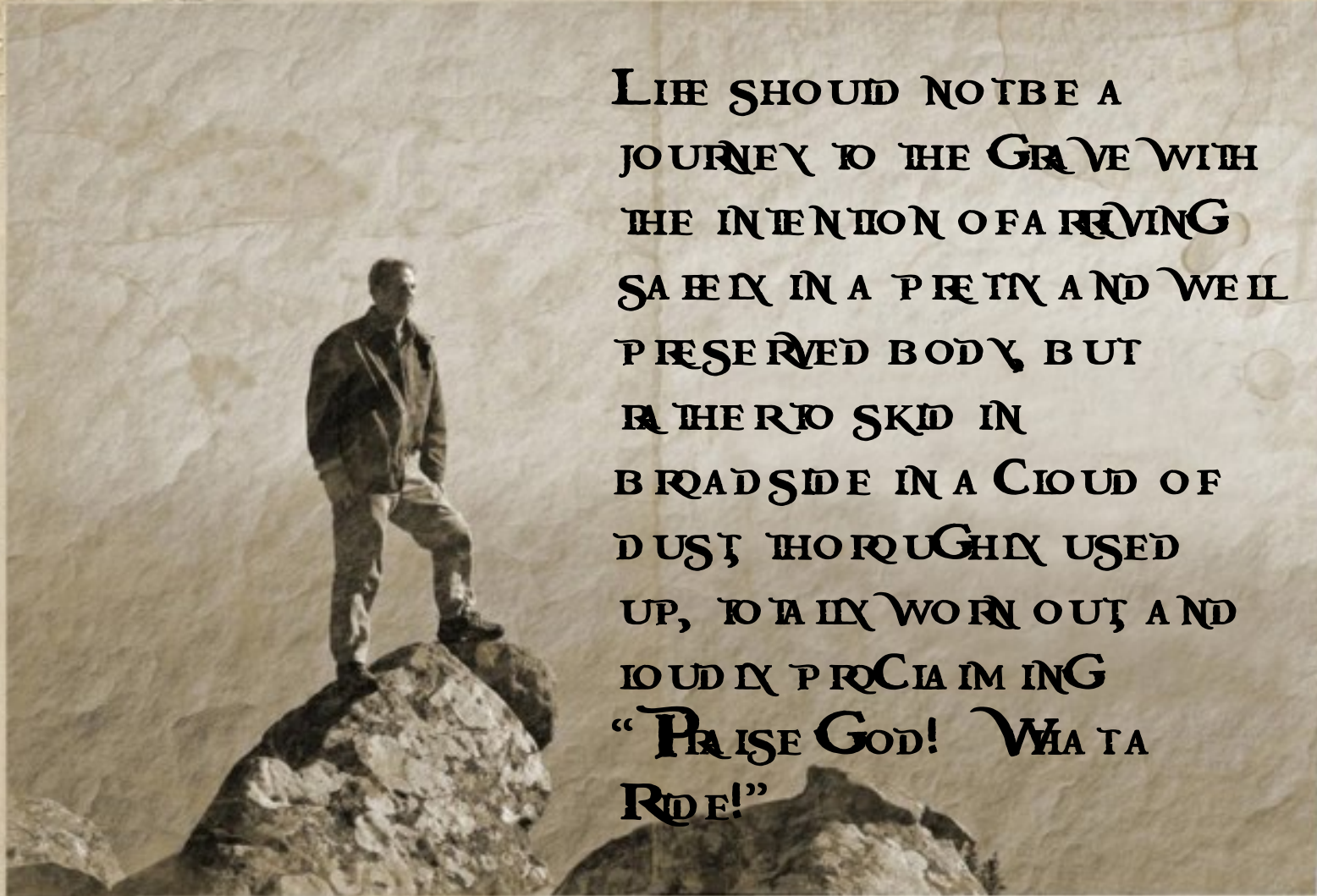
Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines, sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails.

Explore.
Dream.
Discover.

Samuel Clemens

Mark Twain

Samuel Clemens / Mark Twain



LIFE SHOULD NOT BE A
JOURNEY TO THE GRAVE WITH
THE INTENTION OF A REVIVING
SARF IN A PHEIN AND WELL
PRESERVED BODY, BUT
RATHER TO SKID IN
BRADSIDE IN A CLOUD OF
DUST, THOROUGHLY USED
UP, TO TA IX WORN OUT, AND
LOUD IX PROCLAIMING
"PRAISE GOD! WIA TA
RIDE!"

Thank You! ...
Thank You
Very Much!

Tom Harrison

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www.NationalBearFest.com

