

## NCAF&E Testimonial

In a sense, the NCAF&E birthed the award-winning NC Black Bear Festival in Plymouth, NC. While the idea and energy to start the festival was mine, the “how to” came from the NCAF&E. The networking among members and information provided by conferences was like nothing I have ever seen in my 40-year business career. The NCAF&E members don’t view other festivals as competition and have always freely provided answers to all my questions.

Our journey began when I heard about an upcoming meeting of the Eastern Consortium of the NCAF&E in Atlantic Beach, NC. There I met several movers and shakers in the association including Stephanie McIntyre from the Seafood Festival and Julie Beck from the Pickle Festival. Stephanie, in particular, was a great encouragement and source of information for me - a perfect stranger. Anytime I needed recommendations for entertainment, vendors, forms, documents, do’s and don’ts – everyone in the NCAF&E was very helpful.

Evidentially I am a good listener, because as a result of the priceless assistance from many NCAF&E members and learning a tremendous amount by attending NCAF&E conferences, the NC Black Bear Festival won the “Rising Star Award” in our first year. That was followed by winning the “Event of the Year” in only our second year. The third year I won “Director of the Year” and last year we won “Event of the Year” for the second time in four years!

Everything the NC Black Bear Festival has achieved, we owe to the NCAF&E. Not only is the association an invaluable asset to new festivals and events like ours, but it is a constant source of inspiration and information to older festivals through their Showfest annual conference, the Fall Conference and quarterly meetings of the Eastern Consortium. At these events there are a variety of speakers presenting different facets of planning successful festivals and events. Without the NCAF&E, I might as well have been blindfolded. If you want to make a difference in your festival, events and community, then join today!

Tom Harrison

Founder & Director of the NC Black Bear Festival

Plymouth, ~~North Carolina~~ Bear-olina

*“It’s where traffic ends and adventure begins!”* ®