

No Other Place Celebrates The Fourth Like Southport

Nowhere in North Carolina is Independence Day celebrated like it is in Southport.

Southport is the site of the North Carolina Fourth of July Festival, with this year's event set July 1-4.

Each year the people of this small community of 2,400 open their doors and streets to greet more than an estimated 50,000 visitors during the festival.

What makes this festival special is its commitment to the family, according to Karen Hope of the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of

Commerce. She said the festival committee strives to keep that "family atmosphere" from the arts and crafts displays to the entertainment.

This year's opening ceremonies and the community church service will be held Wednesday, July 1, with the pace of the festival building to a spectacular Saturday, July 4.

A family beach day will be observed in nearby Long Beach Thursday, July 2. The day will be filled with surfing, sandcastle

building, volleyball and watermelon competitions for the young and young at heart alike.

The evening will end with a performance by *The Band of Oz*, a well-known beach and top 40s group.

The most activity-filled days of the festival will be Friday and Saturday, July 3 and 4.

In the downtown area of Southport, vendors will set up booths serving items from apple dumpings with ice cream to hot dogs and "elephant ears".

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Light Up The Skies

Fireworks light up the skies in local celebrations of the Fourth of July holiday. Public fireworks displays can usually be viewed at Holden Beach near the west end of the island, on the waterfront at the close of the N.C. Fourth of July Festival in Southport, and over the Cape Fear River at the USS North Carolina Battleship Memorial.

More than 100 arts and crafts booths arrayed in Franklin Square Park and a juried national open art show at Franklin Square Art Gallery will add to the festivities.

Military displays—a reminder of the city's long ties are a prominent part of the festival most years. This year a 40-man detachment from the 2nd Marine Division at Camp Lejeune, a mobile display and infantry weapons display, the U.S. Coast Guard vessel *Diligence* and the U.S. Army National Guard will be a part of the action.

North Tower, a top 40s band, will perform at a street dance Friday night at Waterfront Park in Southport.

Other performers scheduled throughout the festival include *Wild Heart*, a local contemporary country, classic rock and rhythm and blues band; *The Dixieland Society of the Lower Cape Fear*; *Category 5 Band*, a local classic rock group;

a high energy Christian group and the *Rob Messengale Band*, a big band, beach, top 40s and variety band from Greensboro.

A Marine Color Guard will step out at 11 a.m. Saturday, leading a parade of more than 100 units.

Later that afternoon a sailboat race, firefighters' competition, children's games and children's entertainment are planned.

The grand finale opens with a musical tribute by *The Embers*, a popular beach music band, prior to the festival's traditional closing fireworks display.

Family food, games, entertainment and fun; that's what's in store for those who visit the Southport-Oak Island area during the North Carolina Fourth of July Festival.

More information is available from the Southport-Oak Island Chamber of Commerce, Route 5, Box 52, Southport, N.C. 28461.

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