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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

2023 Annual Festivals & Events in Johnston County

Smithfield, NC (January 17th, 2023) – When planning excursions around festivals that happen annually in the south, keep Johnston County’s towns in mind. Johnston County is conveniently located where I-95, I-40, and Highway 70 come together just 30 minutes east of Raleigh, in the center of North Carolina. It is a fun and affordable destination with long-standing, unique events throughout the year. If you have any interest in learning about any of the events listed below, please contact the Johnston County Visitors Bureau or visit our [Press Page](#). A link to hi-res photos of these events can be found [here](#).

Black History Month: February 23 – Activities and events are held around the county during the month. Among them, the Johnston County Heritage Center is holding a Black History program on the 24th at 6:30pm at the Public Library of Johnston County - featuring motivational speaker Franklin Deese of Marshville, NC.

Stepping Back in Time Series: One Saturday a Month – Visit the Tobacco Farm Life Museum in Kenly for demonstrations and displays of traditional arts, crafts, and trades. The 2023 series includes candle making, quilting, tobacco tying and stringing, and more. Most Saturday events are held 10am-3pm.

Live @ the Rudy: Scheduled Throughout the Year – The Rudy Theatre offers four unique, seasonal, family-friendly shows with music, comedy, and more. The March and April show is the Easter Jubilee, May through July is the Summer Jubilee, August through October is the Classic Country Jubilee, and finally the anticipated Christmas Jubilee in November and December.

Bentonville Battlefield Anniversary: March 18 – Bentonville commemorates the anniversary of the battle the third weekend in March each year, with the large reenactments held every five years. The 158th anniversary commemoration of the battle will include living history demonstrations throughout the day and much more.

Skyfest: March 25 – Skyfest is a community festival with professional aerial demonstrations. This event includes parachute team jumps, flyovers, helicopter rappelling, and other aerial performances. There will also be musical entertainment, special performances, static displays, food trucks, beer garden, and a kid's zone.

PDRA Spring Event: March 30 - April 1 – The Professional Drag Racers Association (PDRA) hosts multiple events during their season throughout 2023 at GALOT Motorsports Park in Benson, North Carolina.

Classic Antique Power Farm Heritage Days: April 14-15 – Step back in time and experience a variety of classic antique tractors at the Benson Chamber Park. The event will include tractor games, antique tractors & farm equipment demonstrations, craft vendors, food vendors, corn hole tournament, free live entertainment, bouncy houses, pedal tractor raffle, and a farm equipment auction.

Bentonville in Bloom: April 15 – This event will educate visitors on the natural resources of the battlefield, and encourage visitors to enjoy the walking trail system throughout Bentonville.

Beach Fest: April 29 – This event held at The Farm Entertainment venue in Selma celebrates a unique regional musical genre. This year will be the 10th annual Beach Fest; past performers have included Jim Quick & Coastline, The Embers, and Band of Oz.

Ham & Yam Festival: May 6 – The annual Ham & Yam Festival is teaming with ham biscuits, barbeque pork, sweet potatoes, and more. There will be arts, kid's activities, live entertainment, and the popular "What's That Yam Thing?" art contest.

JoCo Latino Festival: May 7 – Celebrate all things Latino at the 6th annual JoCo Latino Festival with food, vendors, and a kids zone! This free family event takes place outdoors in Downtown Selma and includes live entertainment.

East Coast Truckers Jamboree: May 11-13 – A three day truck and car show, featuring big rigs and muscle cars. The event also boasts live music, games, and an impressive closing fireworks display. Held at the Kenly 95 Petro travel center.

NTPA Tractor Pull: June 2-3 – The National Tractor Pulling Association (NTPA) hosts this tractor pull event, showcasing extreme vehicles and talented pulling drivers. This event at GALOT Motorsports park will display some of the nation's top pullers.

301 Endless Yard Sale: June 16-17 – Johnston County and its towns along US 301 will host the tenth "Endless Yard Sale" which takes place annually the third weekend of June. The communities will join together with deals, antiques, collectibles, and more along a 100-mile stretch of highway between Roanoke Rapids and Dunn, NC.

State Singing Convention: June 23-25 – The oldest Southern gospel convention in the nation happens at the Singing Grove in Benson and celebrates its 102nd anniversary in 2023. It includes three days of gospel music competition including amateur duets, trios, quartets, choirs, and family groups.

Heavy Thunder: August 19 – This is Bentonville's annual summer artillery program, which normally involves several different types of cannon firing demonstrations throughout the day.

Four Oaks Acorn Festival: September 9 – a great family fun event held in the downtown area each year, including children's activities, live entertainment, vendor fair, antique car and tractor show, barbecue competition, and more.

Benson Mule Days: September 21-24 – The fourth Saturday of September has been home to Benson’s Mule Days festival for over 70 years now. This four-day family-fun festival is packed with mule competition events, rodeos, carnival rides, arts and crafts, street dances, and concerts. It also boasts the largest parade in North Carolina!

Monster Truck Throwdown : September 29-30 – Monster Truck Throwdown at GALOT Motorsports Park is an event for the entire family starting with the Track Party before the show! A show sure to electrify crowds with breath-taking feats and raw horsepower! The combination of speed, style, and destruction will leave families on the edge of their seats!

Railroad Days Festival: October 6-8 – Join the fun in Downtown Selma as the town celebrates its railroad heritage for a full weekend. The annual event will offer its regular fare, including live entertainment, vendors, food, rides, a parade and 5K run.

Ava Gardner Festival: October 6-8 – The Ava Gardner museum in the star’s hometown of Smithfield is dedicated to preserving her legacy and hosts this annual festival for visiting fans to enjoy new exhibits, film screenings, and other special events throughout the weekend.

Sonlight Farms: October – This locally-owned farm offers fall fun for the season with corn mazes, hay rides, giant slides, pumpkins, a climbing wall, peddle carts, farm animals, and more on Saturdays throughout the month.

Clayton Fear Farm: October – Known all over the state as a regional “scream park” this haunted attraction offers over 10 unique scary experiences with one admission. Open multiple nights a week through the month of October. Not for the faint of heart!

PDRA Fall Event: October 5-7 – The Professional Drag Racers Association (PDRA) hosts multiple events during their season throughout 2023 at GALOT Motorsports Park in Benson, North Carolina.

Historic Downtown Smithfield Ghost Walk: October 28 – Small groups will be guided through the cemetery where costumed reenactors will tell stories about famous (and perhaps infamous) local persons buried there. Previous featured ghosts include Percy Flowers, Ava Gardner, and Governor Gabriel Johnston.

Clayton Harvest Festival: October 26-29 – With roots dating back to 1951, the Clayton Harvest Festival is one of the largest festivals in Johnston County. It includes a midway with fair rides, games, and food, Clayton’s largest vendor fair, Squealin’ on the Square barbecue contest, a classic car show, tractor show, and bike show, as well as local performances.

Bentonville Fall Festival: October 28 – Historic demonstrations, old-time games, period music, and food trucks as you learn about Bentonville, the Harper House, and the history of the battle and the land.

Meadow Lights: November and December – The largest and oldest Christmas light display in eastern, NC. Family owned and operated, started more than 40 years ago, enjoy lights on over 30 acres and with a train ride through 10+ acres.

Lights on the Neuse: November and December – Boyette’s Farm becomes a winter wonderland. View Christmas lights by hayride, visit with Santa in the 3D Christmas Barn, then stand by the fire to warm up and roast marshmallows to make s’mores.

Christmas Lights on the Farm: November and December – One of JoCo’s newer light displays but a local favorite already. Enjoy a hayride through Christmas Town to the Field of Lights display; visit Santa and his friends, plus music and concessions.

Bentonville Christmas Open House: December 2 – Daytime historic Christmas demos and evening candlelight tours of the Harper House, complete with Christmas caroling, and period refreshments.

The Johnston County Visitors Bureau is the official destination marketing organization for the entire county. For more information, contact Ashby Brame, abrame@johnstoncounty.org or call 919-989-8687, or visit the Johnston County Visitors Bureau website at www.johnstoncountync.org. For a current listing of events in Johnston County throughout the year visit www.johnstoncountync.org/events.

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Photo Caption: Mules on parade; the Benson Mule Days parade is one of the largest in the state of North Carolina.