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Carolina BalloonFest Soars on October 18-20 to Celebrate 40th Anniversary

Statesville, N.C. (09/18/2013) – This October marks the 40th Anniversary of hot air ballooning in Iredell County. Carolina BalloonFest holds a special place in ballooning history as the 2nd longest (consecutively) held hot air balloon event in the United States! The trove of treasured memories and imagery is beholden to many people and they weave a generous story, indeed. The early pioneers and pilots from yesteryear to this 40th Anniversary of our festival continue to inspire its longevity.

When the ‘Fest’ was the ‘Rally’. In 1969, Bill Meadows, a native of Statesville, established Balloon Ascensions, LTD (a flight training and promotion company). Meadows founded The National Balloon Rally in 1974. In those early years of the rally, most of the flights were made from Balloon Ascensions. In 1974, Tracy Barnes moved the Balloon Works from Charlotte, NC to Rhyne Aerodrome near Love Valley, NC and started manufacturing hot air balloons in Iredell County. Annual invitations continued and hot air balloonists gathered, camped, flew and shared adventures to foster their passion for flight. They ascended into the skies in their majestic, colorful balloons which complemented the morning sunrises and afternoon sunsets of north Iredell. The events at Rhyne Aerodrome, owned by Raeford and Anna Rhyne, became so popular that a larger venue was necessary to accommodate the growth of enthusiasts and spectators. Over the next four decades, the rally’s name and venue locations would change.

Carolina BalloonFest is October 18-20, 2013 at the Statesville Regional Airport. The event features over 50 breath-taking hot air balloons that decorate the morning and evening skies. Dozens of balloons light up the venue with a spectacular Saturday Evening Balloon Glow presented by Black Automotive. Families & friends are encouraged to ‘run with the balloons’ on Sunday morning in the first 5K & Fun Run, managed by Racing Toes and presented by Thorlo.

In addition to the beautiful balloons, the festival features all-day activities with a variety of entertainment at the Main Stage presented by Wells Fargo and the 2nd Stage presented by Our State Magazine. Families are encouraged to engage in various activities together in the Kids Zone presented by Yadkin Bank, take a tethered balloon ride or shop for unique gifts and souvenirs at the Artisan Village - Market Place. Guests have an opportunity to experience North Carolina wines and craft beers at “A Taste of Wine & More!” presented by Wine Maestro-Statesville.

“Carolina BalloonFest holds a special place in hot air ballooning history. We are proud to plan a family-friendly event and look forward to celebrating this terrific milestone of hosting 40 consecutive years of hot air balloon rallies and fests in Iredell County,” says Bud Welch, President of the Board of Directors. “Come early and stay late to watch massive balloon launches near dusk and two sanctioned competitions on Saturday and Sunday mornings.” World Champion brothers, Nick Donner and Chase Donner join the participating pilots again this year.

This year, Carolina BalloonFest soars to benefit American Cancer Society (ACS) Relay for Life of Statesville. Relay For Life is the American Cancer Society’s signature annual event, held annually to celebrate those who have fought cancer, remember those lost to cancer and raise funds to create awareness and put an end to the disease.

Day-of-event cash only admissions range from \$5 to \$15.00. Children age 12 and younger will be admitted free on Friday and Sunday. Advance tickets are available online through October 17 via Carolina BalloonFest website. Limited on-site parking is free. Spectators are encouraged to use satellite parking at Iredell County Fairgrounds in Troutman which provides a free shuttle service to the BalloonFest venue for an admission discount. Veterans Appreciation Day is Sunday; retired veterans & active military enter free with military ID. Spectators are encouraged to arrive by 2pm on Saturday and Sunday to guarantee entry. Festival gate times are:

Friday, October 18 3:00pm – 8:00pm
Saturday, October 19 7:00am – 8:00pm
Sunday, October 20 7:00am – 6:00pm

Sponsorship and volunteer opportunities are available! To learn more, visit CarolinaBalloonFest.com.

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