

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MEDIA CONTACTS:

Julie Whitney Austin, Executive Director

704-338-1060

festival@FESTIVALinthePARK.org

John Clemons

704-930-8260

jgclemons54@gmail.com

62nd annual Festival in the Park is back on Sept. 25 - 27

*Nearly 200 artists and their work will be showcased with live music
and dance performances, food and activities for all visitors*

CHARLOTTE (Sept. 8, 2026) -- **Festival in the Park** (www.FESTIVALinthePARK.org), a Charlotte tradition, returns for its 62nd year in Freedom Park from **September 25-27** with a diverse assortment of live performances, food and drink – and a record number of artisans displaying their works. More than 130,000 visitors from across the state are expected to attend this year's Festival.

"We consistently attract outstanding talent from throughout our region to Freedom Park," said Tom Geisler, Festival board president. "The event features over 1,000 stage performers across three days and has expanded its space to welcome nearly 200 artists presenting a variety of visual artworks, including paintings, sculptures, and photography, and other fine works in the park."

Named one of the nation's top 200 festivals by Sunshine Artist Magazine in 2025 and 2026, the Festival boasts an outdoor open-air amphitheater unrivaled in the area. The Festival has also been honored as Best Charlotte Festival by Charlotte Magazine.

Festival admission is free.

ENTERTAINMENT

Premier sponsor UNC Charlotte, which celebrates its 80th anniversary this year, will present a surprise special performance at the Festival and Norm the Niner mascot will be in attendance as well. Scheduled entertainment also includes a diverse program of weekend musical and dance performances at the Freedom Park band shell:

Friday

- **The Bailey Marie Band:** A rising country-rock group from Charlotte, led by Bailey Marie Griggs. The band is known for energetic, modern country music and authentic songwriting.

Saturday

- **Charlotte Pride Band:** A non-profit community music organization promoting diversity and inclusion. The band features multiple ensembles (concert, jazz, pep, marching, chamber), performs at major events, and supports youth through outreach and competitions.
- **Charlotte Youth Ballet (CYB):** A regional ballet company providing young dancers with professional opportunities alongside acclaimed guest artists.
- **Men Standing For Christ:** An all-male gospel chorus and outreach ministry with a 60-year history. The chorus focuses on faith, community service, and traditional gospel music.
- **The Grateful Dudes:** A Charlotte-based Grateful Dead tribute band celebrated for high-energy, improvisational performances. The band fosters a communal, dance-friendly atmosphere and are known for their musicianship and psychedelic visuals.

Sunday

- ☐ **Hope of Israel Dance Ministry:** A Messianic and Israeli folk dance troupe blending traditional Jewish choreography with worship. The dance troupe performs at religious services, hosts workshops, and promotes Israeli cultural dance in the Carolinas.
- ☐ **Youth Orchestras of Charlotte (YOC):** An independent non-profit nurturing young musicians through four developmental ensembles. YOC performs complex works and has achieved national recognition.
- ☐ **Randy Franklin & The Sardines:** An award-winning rock and Americana band based out of Charlotte. Fronted by veteran Charlotte native singer, songwriter, and harmonica player Randy Franklin, the group originally formed in 2013. Melding roots rock, classic-rock hooks, and heart-on-the sleeve storytelling heavily inspired by Tom Petty and Neil Young, the six-piece band has become a beloved fixture of the Carolinas live music circuit and was named "Best Americana Band" at the 2020 Queen City Music Awards. In 2026, the band released its self-titled debut studio vinyl album.

Amusement rides and attractions for all ages will again return to the Festival's Family Fun Zone. More than two dozen food vendors will also add to the sensory experience at the park.

PARKING

Parking is available Friday after 5 p.m. and all day Saturday and Sunday at:

- ☐ Atrium Health Myers Park (GPS location: East Boulevard at South Kings Dr.). Cash only. Limited parking is available for \$20 on Friday and \$20 on Saturday and Sunday at Atrium Health Myers Park, located directly across from the Freedom Park entrance in the 1900 block of East Boulevard.
- ☐ Patrons are also encouraged to consider a ride share service, such as Uber or Lyft, with recommended drop off points at 2435 Cumberland Avenue or 1600 Princeton Avenue.
- ☐ Accessible parking for individuals with disabilities is available on a first-come, first-serve basis at the Freedom Park lot on East Blvd. Vehicles must display either a NC DMV issued disability placard or license plate to enter and park.

DONORS AND SPONSORS

Private donors, known as "Friends of the Festival," help cover the Festival's cost of renting Freedom Park from Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation and the hiring of off-duty Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police officers, medics and firefighters to keep patrons safe.

Festival in the Park is hosted by Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation.

Piedmont Natural Gas is the 2026 Green Sponsor.

UNC Charlotte is the 2026 Premiere Sponsor.

For more detailed information on Festival in the Park acts and activities, visit the website at www.FESTIVALinthePARK.org

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