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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:  
NOVEMBER 25, 2012

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FOURTH DAY ADVERTISING (910)793-1987

## **CAPE FEAR GARDEN CLUB AZALEA GARDEN TOUR©**

### **MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO ECONOMIC IMPACT**

**2012 NORTH CAROLINA AZALEA FESTIVAL**

**APRIL 11-15, 2012**

**WILMINGTON, NC— FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE!**

The recent economic impact study completed by UNCW and commissioned by the North Carolina Azalea Festival Board of Directors brought exciting news to the Wilmington area that over \$50 million dollars is generated during the planning and execution of the festival. The Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour© with its Cape Fear Garden Club, Inc. Azalea Belles© is a major contributor to the economic impact of the festival and plays a key role with the festival in its year-round planning.

The Azalea Festival and the Cape Fear Garden Club, Inc. have a historic and vitally important partnership which lends itself to the spirit as well as to the economic impact of the North Carolina Azalea Festival. Within five years of the birth of the NC Azalea Festival, the Azalea Garden Tour was officially added as an associated event of the NC Azalea Festival. The Festival and the Cape Fear Garden Club have collaborated ever since as partners throughout the NC Azalea Festival's history. The Cape Fear Garden Club added the symbolic antebellum-dressed Azalea Belles to the garden tour in 1969 and the beautiful young girls were quickly invited to participate in a variety of other festival events. For these reasons, the UNCW research team and the NC Azalea Festival Board have provided more specific details regarding the contribution of the Cape Fear Garden Club towards the overall success of the festival.

Out of the reported 15,000 volunteer hours calculated in the study for volunteers of the Festival, 30 % of those hours were credited to the 350-member Cape Fear Garden Club for their work with the annual Azalea Garden Tour and Azalea Belles. The Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Garden Tour has grown each year in success, last year generating over \$108,000 in ticket sales and providing over 120 local high school girls an opportunity to serve the community and the NC Azalea Festival as Cape Fear Garden Club Azalea Belles. The Azalea Belles and the blooming azaleas in the gardens are the two most widely recognized symbols of the festival. While the Azalea Belles' primary responsibility is to serve as hostesses in the gardens on the Azalea Garden Tour, they also participate in most of the major Azalea Festival events. In addition to the indirect economic impact of huge numbers of volunteer hours, the Cape Fear Garden Club directly impacts the economic growth of the community through expenditures in setting up the tour, by renting the antebellum gowns and accessories, and most importantly by donating most of the proceeds in ticket sales from the tour back to the community in the form of beautification, horticultural and conservation grants plus scholarships at UNCW and Cape Fear Community College. The 2011 Azalea Garden Tour grant awards were announced in October 2011, totaling more than \$81,000 disbursed to various organizations, schools, and even to the City of Wilmington for the 3rd street improvement project. Since its inception, the Azalea Garden Tour grant disbursements have totaled well over a million dollars given back to the community.

The Azalea Festival Board is deeply appreciative of the contribution made each year by the Cape Fear Garden Club as well as for the outstanding relationship the festival and the club share. The good news for the community is that the impact of the festival is enhanced significantly through the contribution of the Cape Fear Garden Club with its Azalea Garden Tour and beloved Azalea Belles. The Azalea Festival Board commends the Cape Fear Garden Club for their longstanding contribution to the festival and the community.

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**The elected 2012 Officers are:**

**Dr. Charles Kays**, President – Wilmington Plastic Surgery

**Donna Cameron**, President Elect – City President, Sun Trust Bank

**Stephen Coble**, Vice President – Attorney/Coble Law Firm, PC

**Liz Carroll**, Treasurer - Owner, Driftwood Interiors, Design and Fine Home Furnishings

**Robby Collins**, Assistant Treasurer - Attorney/Collins & Collins Law Offices, PLLC

**Sandra Ray Criner**, Secretary - District Court Judge

**Alison Baringer** , Office Manager.

**The mission of the North Carolina Azalea Festival is to be nationally recognized as a showcase for our community's rich array of artwork, gardens, history and culture through recreational, educational and family-oriented events. The Festival encourages volunteerism and civic participation as it contributes to the region's economy and promotes the unique qualities of Wilmington's river-to-the-sea community.**

Since its inception in 1948, the North Carolina Azalea Festival has blossomed into an extended-weekend celebration that attracts more than 300,000 people annually and economically generates over \$51,000,000.00 for the local economy. The 2012 North Carolina Azalea Festival is a non-profit 501 (c) civic organization.

The major sponsors include Coastal Beverage, Hilton Wilmington Riverside, Progress Energy and Wells Fargo.

*Contact Fourth Day Advertising (910) 793-1987 for further information*

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