



SATURDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2020
LEXINGTON, NORTH CAROLINA

NEWS RELEASE – Lexington, N.C.

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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In lieu of annual festival, the day will focus on community service.

On Saturday, October 24th, when more than 125,000 people were expected to gather in Uptown Lexington for the 37th Annual Barbecue Festival, local businesses and organizations will join the festival organizers in utilizing “festival day” to uplift the community.

With an emphasis on giving back and the city’s world-famous barbecue heritage, Lift Up Lexington (#liftUPlex) will include two components: a food drive and blood drive. Event organizers will have seven drop off locations for the food drive which will benefit Pastor’s Pantry. Those who wish to contribute are asked to bring a minimum of five new, unexpired non-perishable items. Requested items include can goods, cereal, pasta & crackers. For a complete list visit BarbecueFestival.com. There will be an adherence to COVID-19 guidelines at all drop-off locations.

The festival’s participating restaurants: Smokey Joe’s Barbecue, Barbecue Center, Speedy’s Barbecue and Stamey’s Barbecue will have tents set up at their sites to collect items from 11:00am until 7:00pm. In exchange for the donation of at least five items of food per person, donors will receive a coupon for a free barbecue sandwich. The coupon will be good for October 24 only at that restaurant. One coupon per person with a max of four coupons per family.

At the J. Smith Young YMCA, event organizers will accept food drive donations and hold a blood drive for the American Red Cross from 10:00am-3:30pm. All attempting donors will receive a special t-shirt, a free barbecue sandwich and more to thank donors for their generosity and to commemorate the Lift Up Lexington campaign. To reserve an appointment, visit redcrossblood.org and enter sponsor code: BBQ Festival.

The Lexington Visitor Center, at 2 N. Main Street, will serve as a food drive donation drop-off site from 10:00am-4:00pm. Festival souvenirs will be sold at this location. There will also be a limited number of t-shirts commemorating Lift Up Lexington available for purchase.

Food Lion will be participating in the food drive and will be collecting food at their 848 N. Winston Road location from 11:00am-5:00pm. Those who bring a donation will have the opportunity to spin a prize wheel.

Through a partnership with the Lexington Tourism Authority, select merchants in Uptown Lexington will also be partaking in the food drive. In exchange for their contributions, merchants will offer a discount voucher or giveaway of their choice. A complete list of participating merchants can be found on the Barbecue Festival website at BarbecueFestival.com.

As a bonus, the day will conclude with the Barbecue Festival Virtual Show and Concert at 7:00pm on the festival's Facebook page. The show will consist of a video presentation including clips and pictures previous festivals and interviews. The concert will feature festival favorites Chairmen of the Board and Jim Quick and Coastline Band.

Citing a desire to utilize "festival day," Barbecue Festival Executive Director, Stephanie K. Saintsing Naset, is encouraged by the willingness of many to do the same.

"While we'll miss gathering with thousands of festival attendees in the streets of Uptown Lexington, we didn't want to miss the opportunity to create an initiative that would have a positive impact on our city. Often, obstacles create opportunities. After the announcement that our beloved street festival would be canceled this year due to the ongoing pandemic, I immediately went to work on developing a campaign that would uplift our community. Sitting idle on October 24 wasn't an option. Following positive conversations with the official festival restaurants, major sponsors, the American Red Cross, the J. Smith Young YMCA, and Pastor's Pantry, the Lift Up Lexington campaign was born. The reality is Lexington is open for business. We want to do everything we can to support our community during this unprecedented time, in a socially distant and safe way. I'm grateful to the restaurants, sponsors, merchants, and volunteers that eagerly jumped on board to bring this campaign to life. We're especially proud that we can help Pastor's Pantry fulfill their mission of targeting senior hunger in Davidson County. It's going to be a great day celebrating our community and our world-famous barbecue heritage."

Sponsors that are making this initiative possible include: Orrell's Food Service, Lexington Utilities, Lexington Tourism Authority, BB&T now Truist, Food Lion, and Pepsi Bottling Ventures.

Established in 1983, the first Barbecue Festival was held October 27, 1984. The Barbecue Festival has achieved regional, statewide, and national recognition for its excellence. Accolades and recognitions include: Top Ten Food Festivals in America by Travel & Leisure Magazine, Top 20 October Event by Southeast Tourism Society, Library of Congress Local Legacies project, 50-plus awards through the N.C. Association of Festivals and Events awards program, Top Ten Great Places to Celebrate Food by USA Today.

Pastor's Pantry is a nonprofit food pantry that targets senior hunger. Their focus is seniors (age 60-plus) in financial stress in Davidson County, North Carolina. They provide groceries for seniors in need, once per month, and emergency food to individuals of all ages in crisis mode. Many of the seniors live with younger relatives in their households, so the number of people they serve is greater than the number of seniors who apply for help. Pastor's Pantry distributes an average of 5,000 bags of groceries each month, in addition to emergency food. Currently, they help more than 700 individuals on average per month in nearly 500 senior households. The food is offered at no cost to the recipient.