



# SHOWFEST 2025

## EVENT INNOVATORS CONFERENCE

### *EDUCATIONAL SESSION SCHEDULE*

#### **SESSIONS – MONDAY, JANUARY 27**

##### **SESSION A – 10AM LAKEVIEW**

##### **SPONSORSHIP SYNERGY: WEAVING PARTNERS INTO THE FABRIC OF YOUR FESTIVAL**

**Presented by: Stephanie McIntyre, CFEE  
Founder, Staircase Event & Sponsorship Consulting**

Get ready to revolutionize your festival's sponsorship strategy! In this dynamic and interactive session, you'll learn how to go beyond traditional sponsor banners and transform your events into unforgettable experiences for attendees and sponsors alike.

Whether you're a seasoned festival director or new to the industry, this session is packed with actionable strategies that will make your sponsors want to return year after year. Don't miss this opportunity to take your events to the next level—your sponsors and attendees will thank you. Join us and make your festival the must-attend event of the year!

*Stephanie McIntyre has been transforming events and building communities across North Carolina for decades. A proud native of the Tar Heel State, Stephanie brings an infectious energy and heartfelt passion to every project she touches. With over 22 years of experience leading the North Carolina Seafood Festival to award-winning success, she has a proven track record of turning events into vibrant, economic drivers that inspire connection and celebration.*

*As the founder of Staircase Event & Sponsorship Consulting, Stephanie blends her expertise with her love of serving and helping others succeed. She's passionate about empowering festivals and nonprofits to grow, thrive, and build lasting partnerships with sponsors. Her thoughtful, step-by-step approach ensures every detail is designed to elevate your event while creating meaningful experiences for attendees and stakeholders alike. An Award-Winning Certified Event Planner, Stephanie's goal is simple: to make your event a success story—one step at a time.*

## **SESSION A – 10AM GLENWATERS**

### **AI-DRIVEN INNOVATION: Transforming the Future of Festival and Event Management**

Presented by: Dr. Brianna S. Clark, Chair Department of Event and Hospitality Management at High Point University

AI is changing how we manage and run festivals, making it easier and more efficient than ever. In this session, we'll break down how AI can help festival managers with everything from administrative tasks to planning to improving the overall attendee experience. Learn how AI tools can help you make better decisions, save time on repetitive tasks, and understand your audience better. Whether you're new to AI or looking to take your events to the next level, this session will provide practical insights on how AI can simplify your work and make your festivals more successful.

## **OPENING KEYNOTE – 1PM LAKEVIEW**

### **THE FUTURE OF THE FESTIVAL AND EVENT INDUSTRY**

Presented by: Ira Rosen MA/CFEE

President and CEO Ira L Rosen LLC-Festival and Event Consulting

Finding success in the festival and event industry was never easy, but in the post-pandemic era challenges seem to be greater each and every day. Concern about revenues, security, insurance, sponsorship, attendance and countless other issues keep us awake at night. But yet, the industry endures. Why? People need events. This session will explore where we have been and where we are going and how we keep thriving in challenging times.

*Ira L. Rosen is the President and CEO of Ira L Rosen, LLC, a consulting firm providing services to the worldwide festival and event industry. He is a highly regarded consultant with decades of global industry experience. Although he has a very comprehensive industry background, he specializes in the areas of event risk assessment, evaluation and planning for festivals and events, and practical strategic development. From 2008 to 2023, he taught many different event management courses at Temple University in Philadelphia and developed their award-winning Event Leadership Executive Certificate program. Additionally, for over thirty years he owned and operated Entertainment On Location, Inc. (EOL), a full-service event production and consulting company based in New Jersey.*

*Prior to opening EOL, Ira worked for over seven years with Radio City Music Hall Productions. His production background includes the Super Bowl half-time show, multi-million-dollar parades, major corporate events around the world and tourism development projects for many different organizations.*

*Ira has spoken at conferences and conventions and has done training programs around the world. He has written and spoken extensively on key industry topics ranging from*

*risk management to sponsorship to the financial and operational management of events. Ira holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees from Montclair State University in New Jersey and is a Certified Festivals and Events Executive (CFEE). In 2005, he was inducted into the International Festivals and Events Association Hall of Fame, becoming one of only 70 people in the world to hold this honor. He has also received numerous awards and recognitions from Temple University, the International Live Events Association, and many others.*

## **SESSION A – 2PM LAKEVIEW**

### **ALCOHOL RISK REDUCTION TRAINING**

Presented by: Charlie Fuller, Vice President of Alcohol Management LLC

The Alcohol Risk Reduction Training (ARRT) is a training program approved by the North Carolina Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission (NC-ABCC). The training is designed to educate the public on the responsibilities/ liabilities associated with selling and or serving Alcohol in North Carolina and the NC-ABCC Rules and Regulations that apply. Training certificates will be provided.

*Charlie Fuller currently serves as Vice President of Alcohol Management, LLC. Charlie recently retired from the NC ABC Commission after 18 years of service. Charlie worked as an Information and Communication Specialist in the Education and Training Division and as a Compliance Office in the Audit Division. Charlie has trained thousands of employees and volunteers in responsible beverage service in North and South Carolina. Charlie has provided alcohol risk management consulting to colleges and universities throughout the state. Charlie was a frequent guest speaker at numerous associations on ABC laws and regulations.*

## **SESSION B – 2PM GLENWATERS**

### **BUILDING ITENERARIES FOR YOUR TOWN AROUND KEY FESTIVALS AND EVENTS**

Presented by: **Simon Jones, Uplift NC**

Your festival or event brings people into your destination to learn about your community and spend money. Visitor itineraries are a way of keeping them in your region for long to learn and spend even more! This session will highlight the components of great itineraries and provide steps & tools to building your own itineraries around your festival or event.

*Simon is the founder of NatureScapes ([www.nature-tourism.com](http://www.nature-tourism.com)), a company dedicated to enhancing the long-term sustainability of natural land-&-seascapes as well as the people, places and cultures connected to them --- through tourism. Simon also co-leads the UPLIFT North Carolina program ([www.UPLIFTtourism.com](http://www.UPLIFTtourism.com)).*

*For the last 20+ years Simon has worked with governments, NGO's and businesses to plan and develop immersive and engaging nature and cultural-based tourism experiences around the world. His experience includes tourism destination planning, product development and storytelling, working with organizations such as National Geographic and The Smithsonian Institution as well as groups like The World Bank, the US Forest Service, and others. Most recently Simon's experience includes designing and co-leading the UPLIFT tourism program that provides a comprehensive suite of tools, trainings, professional development and mentoring to rural and small-town tourism business, sites, attractions, festivals and destinations in North Carolina. He has also recently completed the development and implementation of an online workshop series on tourism product development, itinerary building and storytelling for Native American tribes in Virginia and Montana. Simon has a Masters of Tourism Administration with concentration in Sustainable Destination Management from The George Washington University School of Business.*

## **SESSION B – 3:45PM LAKEVIEW**

### **CREATING VISUAL CONTENT THAT STOPS THE SCROLL**

**Presented by: Michael Gross, BG Digital**

Tips for designing eye-catching graphics, creating viral-worthy reels, and curating visually compelling feeds. Insights into photography and video editing tools to make festival content stand out.

*Michael is an east coast, crab loving, Marylander. When he wasn't eating crab cakes and watching football, he was working on his first business at the age of 17. With 20 year's experience in sales & marketing and a collective team experience of over 250 years' there are few situations BG Digital has not experienced when it comes to Digital Marketing. The world wide web is always evolving making online presence a never-ending game that can make or break a business. From websites to SEO to Social media to paid advertising, Michael has proven techniques that have helped over a 1,000 businesses out rank their competition and increase overall engagement.*

## **SESSION B – 3:45PM GLENWATERS**

### **STATE OF THE INDUSTRY PANEL DISCUSSION**

Join us for an engaging panel discussion featuring industry professionals as they explore the latest trends and topics shaping the festival and event industry. This conversation will examine innovative practices and event organizers' challenges, offering valuable insights and expertise from experienced leaders.

## **SESSIONS – TUESDAY, JANUARY 28**

### **SESSION A - 9AM LAKEVIEW**

#### **EVENT ENERGIZER: Shifting from Routine to Riveting** (hands-on workshop)

Presented by: Ira Rosen MA/CFEE

President and CEO Ira L Rosen LLC-Festival and Event Consulting

Event producers are often focused on the questions of "What we are doing" and "How we are doing it." This hands-on session will explore the "why" we do events focusing on our stakeholders' needs. This will be a hands-on workshop exploring the beginning stages of The Event Canvas ™

### **SESSION B - 9AM GLENWATERS**

#### **ROUNDTABLE SESSIONS**

Join us for engaging and informative roundtable sessions covering a wide range of topics related to festivals and events. These sessions will provide a platform for discussion and the exchange of ideas and experiences among industry professionals.

### **SESSION B – 11AM LAKEVIEW**

#### **TOURISM TRENDS & ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF FESTIVALS & EVENTS: An Update from Visit NC**

Presented by: André Nabors and Ashton English with VISIT NC

*André Nabors has served as the Partner Relations Manager for the Visit North Carolina (formerly North Carolina Division of Tourism, Film & Sports Development) since 2010. Visit NC a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina (EDPNC), supporting sustainable efforts to market and promote the state's natural, historic and cultural resources; and provide assistance to communities, non-profits, and tourism related entities for development to improve tourism product and visitation across North Carolina. In December of 2012, Tourism was charged to oversee the NC Certified Retirement Community Program to encourage retirees and those planning to retire to make their home in North Carolina.*

*André formerly held a similar position with the West Virginia Division of Tourism, where he provided marketing, research, communications and other types of assistance to communities, attractions and CVBs throughout West Virginia. In that role, he worked to develop the state's first African-American Heritage Guide identifying cultural and historic attractions, as well as foster its Civil War Trails program. André also worked on several projects such as Scenic Byways, Rail to Trails, National Coal Heritage Area, Freedom Trek II and III, Governor's Black History Month Kick-Off program, and the Booker T. Washington Institute at WV State University. Before moving to North Carolina, André was convention sales manager for the Charleston (W.V.) CVB, where he covered the markets of sports, military, group, fraternity and also*

*managed the Charleston Sports Committee. He began his career in tourism in June 1992 with the West Virginia's Parkways Authority Welcome Centers as a travel counselor and manager. André is a Travel Marketing Professional (TMP) through the Southeast Tourism Society Marketing College program and has over 20 years of experience in the tourism industry.*

***Ashton English** has been the Tourism Data Specialist at Visit North Carolina (formerly the NC Division of Tourism, Film and Sports Development) since 2022. Prior, she worked in various tourism positions ranging from food and beverage, resort management and commercial accommodations. Ashton worked on a USDA/NIFA funded research project studying the impact of virtual agritourism experience on children's agriculture literacy at NCSU. Ashton received her M.S. Communication and Information (2023) from the University of Tennessee Knoxville and her B.S. in Parks, Recreation, Tourism Management from North Carolina State University (2021).*

*In her current role at Visit NC, Ashton provides strategic direction and oversight of the organization's research program and works closely with the entire team to implement initiatives that help guide marketing decisions to support tourism to and within North Carolina. Ashton also manages Visit NC's CRM platform to support the tourism industry and communicate effectively with staff, stakeholders and community members as well as market to consumers.*

*Ashton is also a sitting board member on the Southeast chapter of the Travel and Tourism Research Association. Which includes twelve states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia. She has also served advisory committees such as North Carolina State University department of Parks, Recreation, Tourism Management. Ashton has achieved many certifications such as Natural Restaurant and Lodging certifications, American Hotel and Lodging Education Institute-guest services professional.*

## **SESSION B – 11AM GLENWATERS**

### **MAIN STREET: Driving Downtown Vitality and Economic Growth**

Presented by: Elizabeth (Liz) H. Parham, CMSM  
Director, NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center  
North Carolina Department of Commerce

An update from NC Main Street and Rural Planning Director Liz Parham on progress in 2024, a forward-looking forecast for 2025 and beyond, and the pivotal role of festivals in fostering growth.

*Liz Parham has worked for more than 37 years in the field of downtown revitalization and rural economic development. She serves as the director of the NC Main Street & Rural Planning Center at the North Carolina Department of Commerce, where she leads a team that manages the Main Street Programs, Rural Planning Program, the Rural Transformation Grant Fund – Downtown Revitalization category, and the Rural Downtown Economic Development Grant program. Parham is a certified facilitator who conducts strategic economic development planning, provides robust training and educational opportunities in downtown revitalization, provides technical assistance for project and program development, and manages federal and state funding for downtown districts in North Carolina. Under her leadership, the Center also*



*facilitates the largest statewide downtown revitalization conference in the United States. Prior to her current position, she worked for downtown revitalization nonprofit organizations in Sumter, South Carolina, and in Chapel Hill, Greensboro, Lenoir and Lexington, North Carolina. Liz is a Certified Main Street Director from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the National Main Street Center and is Certified in Nonprofit Management from Duke University. She has a passion for downtown commercial architecture, small businesses, and the assets of rural North Carolina.*

## **SESSION C - 11AM WALDEN**

### **WORKING WITH YOUR HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

Presented by: Lillian Koontz, MPA, REHS Health Director Davidson County

It's important to ensure the safety and enjoyment of all attendees at your event, particularly with regards to food service. Working with the local health department to ensure that each food vendor is following all guidelines and regulations is an essential step. This will not only help ensure the safety of attendees, but also allow you to focus on delivering a memorable experience for everyone involved.

*Lillian Koontz began her public health career with the Davidson County Health Department in 2007 as an Environmental Health Specialist. Since 2016, she has served as Local Health Director for Davidson County. Throughout her career she has placed high value on engagement and advancing the public health system through professional organization involvement and leadership. Lillian has held numerous Public Health Leadership roles throughout her career starting in 2008 with the officer slate of the West Piedmont Environmental Health Section then moving to the NCPHA Environmental Health Section to now serving as President of the NC Association of Local Health Directors. She received an undergraduate degree in Environmental Studies/Biology with a minor in Chemistry from UNC-Wilmington and a Master's in Public Administration from Appalachian State University.*