



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**The official home of the North Carolina Fourth of July Celebration
Announces Opening Ceremony**

SOUTHPORT, N.C. - The 4th of July Committee is pleased to announce Opening Ceremonies will be held Sunday, June 23rd beginning at 2:30 p.m. Highlights include the Reading of the Declaration of Independence by Lee Norris in period costume and music by the 208th Army Reserve Band, Combination 9.0.

The Opening Ceremony builds upon its ceremonial opening throughout the week and culminates with a grand fireworks display at Waterfront Park. The Opening Ceremony includes welcomes from the Mayor of Southport and Festival President, singing of the national anthem by South Brunswick High School graduate Morgan Brendle and flag raising on the Fort Johnston Lawn by the Trinity United Methodist Church sponsored by the Boy Scout Troop #238. The reading of the Declaration of Independence by Lee Norris is followed by a military band concert.

The 208th Army Band is a United States Army Reserve Band stationed in Concord, N.C., Combination 9.0 (Jazz Band) will perform this year. The band's primary mission is to promote the esprit de corps of our fighting forces and act as musical goodwill ambassadors for the Army throughout the entire Southeastern United States and Puerto Rico.

The 208th Army Band's history started in 1956 when the band was activated after a lateral transfer of personnel and equipment from the 94th Army National Guard Band of North Carolina. The band was re-designated as the 808th Army Band and finally in 1984 re-designated as the 108th Division Band and attached to Headquarters Company in Charlotte, N.C. In 2008, the band was re-designated once again as the 208th Army Band and moved to Concord, N.C. under the 81st RSC. The band has served both at home and abroad spreading their musical message of goodwill and patriotism.

In the year 2000, the band was deployed to El Salvador as part of Operation New Horizons, Task Force Santa Fe to provide musical support for morale and to support international community relations. The band has performed concerts and parades at Walt Disney World, the Coca-Cola 600, Carolina Panther's games, Myrtle Beach, Washington, D.C., and various Veteran's Day and Independence Day parades and concerts. However, the band's most important and vital service continues to be providing moral support, performing in ceremonies for soldiers being deployed to combat and returning home and honoring fallen veterans in the form of Taps for military funerals and memorial services.

This event is sponsored by The City of Southport and organized by Southport Realty, Inc.

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The history of Southport's Fourth of July Festival celebration was first recorded in a newspaper in 1795. Now the event has grown to attract more than 50,000 visitors each year. Through the years, because of the efforts of civic groups and citizens the festival has evolved to encompass a wide variety of American celebration traditions. And what could be more American than a Naturalization Ceremony which was incorporated into the N.C. Fourth of July Festival in 1996 and administered by what is now the United States Department of Homeland Security U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS). Holding true to its mission of promoting patriotism, the festival also holds a Veterans Recognition Ceremony, Flag Retirement Ceremony and Flag Raising Ceremony.