



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **N.C. Fourth of July Festival to Host Flag Retirement Ceremony**

**SOUTHPORT, N.C.** – Per the U.S. Flag Code, when a flag is in such a condition that it is no longer a fitting emblem for display it is to be destroyed in a dignified way, and each year the N.C. 4th of July Festival provides an opportunity to honorably retire these flags.

On July 3rd at 6 p.m. festival-goers are invited to Keziah Park for the annual Flag Retirement Ceremony. The Ceremony is organized by the Richard H. Stewart Jr. American Legion Post and the Cape Fear Council of Boy Scouts. Participants are encouraged to join in a public rendition of the *Star Spangled Banner* and *America the Beautiful*, and Vietnam Veteran Dave Holly will lead the crowd in the Pledge of Allegiance.

R. Michael (Mike) Kirchner is the keynote speaker for this event. Mike is an Air Force veteran and served from 1966-1970. He served two tours in Vietnam attached to Det. 5, 6922 Security Wing as an intelligence analyst. Following the military, Mike entered law enforcement and worked in various police departments in Berkshire County. He retired as the Chief of Police in West Stockbridge, MA in 1999. Mike then pursued a second career in museum security and retired as the Director of Safety and Security at the Harvard University Art Museums in 2014. Mike resides in Boiling Springs Lakes with his wife Sheryl. They are originally from Berkshire County Massachusetts. Mike has two grown daughters and four grandchildren, still living in New England.

Those with a worn flag in need of retirement may leave the flag anytime during the year at the Southport-Oak Island Area Chamber of Commerce Welcome Center at 4433 Long Beach Road, or the V.F.W. Post 104900 at 103 SE 50th Street on Oak Island for proper disposal.

A new U.S. Flag may be purchased at the Southport-Oak Island Area Chamber of Commerce Welcome Center for \$20. All proceeds from flag sales go to support the N.C. 4th of July Festival. The flags are a standard 3x5 size, made in the U.S.A and are nylon.

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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, the efforts of civic groups and citizens has helped the festival evolve 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.