



Hot air balloons will again light up the night and fly through the air at an Anderson festival this May. FILE PHOTO

Hot air balloon festival coming to Anderson

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In her time with Anderson County, Angie Stringer did her fair share of event planning. From Celebrate Anderson to the Tour de La France to the Great American Balloon Fest, Stringer put her mark on multiple events that defined Anderson for years.

Now, as executive director of the Cancer Association of Anderson, Stringer is looking to parlay those

skills and connections into a new event with a familiar focus.

On May 4-6, hot-air balloons will rise over Anderson as part of the Hot Air Affair: Rise Above Cancer event. It will combine many things that appeal to Anderson and the rest of the Upstate in a unique, though historic, setting.

"Anderson loves hot-air balloons, and balloonists love Anderson," Stringer said. "Having a festival like this is something we have talked about for the last year and a half, but this seemed like the perfect time to pull it off."

For location, Stringer approached Trey and Bryan Boggs, owners of Palmetto Moonshine and Big Water Marina as well as of the Rocky River Plantation on East River Street in Anderson. For the past couple years, the Boggs brothers have been remodeling and renovating the "big white house on the hill" and the land that surrounds it. Stringer thought it an ideal location to invite balloonists, car aficionados, food trucks and more for a weekend of fun.

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And when Trey Boggs heard about it, he jumped at the chance to get involved.

"The Rocky River Plantation is perfect for this idea," Trey said. "And when Angie is involved with just about anything, you can count us in."

The festival will feature an "auto extravaganza" with cars, trucks, motorcycles and pretty much anything that has or has had an engine. Food trucks and restaurants are getting involved and, Palmetto Moonshine will be on site offering signature drinks from its product line.

The festival will come on an already big entertainment weekend. It's Cinco de Mayo and it's the weekend of the Kentucky Derby. As part of the Derby celebration, the Rocky River Plantation barn will have a special VIP viewing party.

But the hot air balloons will be the star of the show. The event opens on Friday with a balloon glow and ends with rides and friendly competitions.

"In the first 10 hours of sending out invites to a select few balloonists, we had 15 confirm," Stringer said. "People who know love the way Anderson rolls out the red carpet for balloonists."

Stringer said they plan to offer tethered rides as well as full sponsor rides that weekend. The full lineup of entertainment, food and beverages still is being planned.

The event supports the Cancer Association of Anderson, which provides local support for those fighting cancer and families directly affected by the disease and its many forms. Stringer said that includes everything from wigs and accessories for those in treatment to mileage reimbursement, lodging during procedures away from home, and much, much more.

"People don't realize this all the time, but our organization is completely local and gets no national help whatsoever," Stringer said.

"We hope to raise somewhere between \$20,000 and \$25,000 with this event."

Admission will be free. There will be a fee to park, however, and all proceeds will go to the Cancer Association of Anderson.

Rocky River Plantation is at 2000 E. River St., Anderson.