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The North Carolina Arboretum Revamps Popular *Winter Lights* Holiday Light Show; Changes Program to a Drive-thru Event for Extra Safety Measures

ASHEVILLE, N.C. (August 17, 2020) – The North Carolina Arboretum’s *Winter Lights* holiday light show will light up hearts and spirits this holiday season but with a safe, spectacular twist. This year, guests are invited to take a dreamy ride through the Arboretum’s enchanted forest and experience Asheville’s *brightest* holiday tradition safely within their own vehicles. In light of COVID-19, the Arboretum has converted its popular event into a drive-thru show, allowing guests to navigate through a one-mile stretch of the Arboretum’s campus and see unique exhibits covered in thousands of holiday lights. As the Arboretum’s largest fundraising event of the year, proceeds generated from *Winter Lights* will directly support the Arboretum’s mission-driven programming.

Designed with an artistic aesthetic, this family-friendly event features beautifully lit displays and glowing landscapes nestled along the Arboretum’s woodland edge and garden areas. As part of the show’s redesign, visitors will enjoy several new nature-themed displays, including winter wildlife, colorful butterflies, a special insect lantern exhibit and a giant daisy “garden.” Upon arrival, guests will select a special radio station that features the sounds of their favorite holiday tunes to accompany the show from inside their vehicle.

“By converting *Winter Lights* into a drive-thru event, the Arboretum has created an entirely new design perspective that showcases the landscape through your vehicle windshield and allows guests to feel immersed in lights at a scale that is in tune with the great outdoors,” explained Clara Curtis, senior director for mission delivery at The North Carolina Arboretum and co-designer for *Winter Lights*. “We are excited to introduce several new features and design elements this year, along with some fun twists, that will surely delight guests and create happy moments and memories this holiday season.”

Beyond this year’s safety measures, the Arboretum has also extended the show’s dates and times to provide better accommodation for guests. *Winter Lights* will now be held November 20, 2020 – January 10, 2021, from 5:30 to 10:30 p.m. (incoming gate closes at 10 p.m.). Pre-sale admission is \$25 per personal vehicle and \$30 at the gate the night of the event. Guests are strongly encouraged to purchase their tickets ahead of time online at ncwinterlights.com to save on ticket fees and reserve their space. (Commercial vans and motor coaches will be charged a premium; please see website for details.) Arboretum Society members will receive \$3 off their pre-sale tickets, and the Arboretum will be offering discounted pricing every Tuesday (excluding December 22) and the week of November 30 - December 3). Tickets will be available for purchase beginning Tuesday, September 1.

“Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arboretum is excited to uphold its annual holiday tradition for our community while protecting the safety and health of our staff and guests,” said George Briggs, executive director of The North Carolina Arboretum. “We look forward to sharing this new experience and offer a different way of seeing the Arboretum and nature through an alternative exciting path.”

To purchase tickets for *Winter Lights*, please visit ncwinterlights.com.

Support for Winter Lights is provided in part by The North Carolina Arboretum Society, Asheville Citizen-Times, Asheville Outlets, Buncombe County Tourism Development Authority, iHeartMedia Asheville, K2 Irrigation Services, Inc., RomanticAsheville.com Travel Guide, Smoky Mountain Living Magazine, Spectrum Reach, Carolina Living Choices, Friendship Park at Givens Estates, Lamar Outdoor Advertising, Our State Magazine, Southeastern Container, Daniels Graphics.

About The North Carolina Arboretum

The North Carolina Arboretum is located off the Blue Ridge Parkway at Milepost 393. From I-26, take Exit 33 and follow Blue Ridge Parkway signs for two miles to the entrance ramp. Please visit www.ncarboretum.org for parking fees and hours of operation.

Each year more than 500,000 visitors experience the Arboretum's gardens, trails, exhibits and plant shows, educational programs and lectures. The Arboretum's ability to meet its mission and enrich the visitor experience is made possible by a community of supporting resources – from members, donors, volunteers and staff to state and local funds, special events, tribute gifts, grants and community partners.

The central mission of The North Carolina Arboretum, an affiliate institution of the 17-campus University of North Carolina System, is to cultivate connections among people, plants and places. A standard daytime parking fee of \$16 per personal vehicle is required for non-Arboretum members. Special events and after-hours activities may require additional fees. For more information, please call (828) 665-2492 or visit www.ncarboretum.org.

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