



## SUBMISSION FORM

All submission forms must include the following information. Separate submission forms must be turned in for each eligible program. **Deadline: July 1, 2025.** Please include this submission form as the first page of your electronic entry. If you do not receive an email confirming receipt of your entry within 3 days of submission, please contact [Gage Harter](#).


### PROGRAM INFORMATION

County: Franklin  
Program Title: Franklin County Mullet Competition  
Program Category: Parks & Recreation

### CONTACT INFORMATION

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### SIGNATURE OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR OR DEPUTY/ASSISTANT COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Name: Paul Chapman  
Title: Director of Parks, Recreation & Office of Aging  
Signature: 

## **Franklin County Mullet Competition**

### **Executive Summary**

On July 4, 2024, Franklin County Parks & Recreation launched one of its most creative and widely embraced events to date: the Franklin County Mullet Competition. Held during the Rocky Mount Rotary Club's annual Independence Festival, the event took place on the Franklin County High School football field and quickly became the talk of the town — a new local tradition was born.

What started as a quirky idea from local teens evolved into a community-wide celebration of rural pride, humor, and hair. With 36 contestants aged 1 to 62, the event featured patriotic costumes, themed prizes (including an epic championship belt), and wild crowd support. Judged by local hairdressers and backed by small business sponsors, it was an instant hit. More than just a competition, it became a cultural moment — and it's already growing buzz for next year.

This winning snapshot captures the triumphant spirit of community celebration as nine-year-old Barrett, our first-ever Mullet Competition champion, hoists his championship belt in front of a cheering crowd. His beaming smile perfectly embodies the fun, pride, and playful spirit that define our department's commitment to creating memorable, all-ages events.



**Photo Caption**

Nine-year-old Barrett celebrates his victory as the first-ever Mullet Competition Champion, hoisting his custom championship belt on stage and embodying the excitement and community pride of the event.

## **Innovative and Creative Design to solve a Problem/Challenge**

The Franklin County Mullet Competition was the first of its kind in the region, originally inspired by a group of at-risk middle and high school students during a community engagement project with the Tourism Department. Though their original plan didn't pan out, their idea — a bold celebration of mullet culture — was too good to let go. Parks and Rec partnered with the students and Tourism to bring it to life.

The event was split into age groups (kids, teens, adults) and drew 36 contestants, ranging from toddlers to retirees. Four local hairdressers volunteered as judges, scoring each mullet on cut, styling, and stage presence. Winners earned oversized medallions, and the Grand Champion took home a WWE-style championship belt — along with community-wide fame and invitations to future public events.

From red, white, and blue flair to themed headbands given to attendees, the event leaned fully into its playful, patriotic spirit. It was pure, multigenerational Franklin County joy. In a rural area where mullets are practically cultural currency, this event offered inclusive, intergenerational fun with a healthy dose of self-aware humor. Community feedback was immediate and glowing — online and in person. Photos, posts, and word of mouth celebrated the event for its originality and heart.

As one attendee put it:

“I haven't been this excited to grow my hair out since high school.”

## **Department Promotion Use**

This photo served as the cover image for our quarterly *Playbook*, a printed magazine that showcases all our Parks and Recreation programming. It was also featured in social media posts highlighting the success of our inaugural Mullet Competition event, helping to promote our creative and family-friendly offerings. The image became an instant favorite in our marketing to show how we welcome creativity, humor, and community engagement at all our events.

## **How the Photo Exemplifies Department Services**

In a single frame, this image captures the essence of what we strive for in our parks and recreation programming: celebrating individuality, fostering community pride, and creating unforgettable experiences for all ages. Barrett's visible excitement and the proud display of his championship belt symbolizes the inclusive, lively environment we work hard to cultivate in every event we host.

## **Effective Promotion & Strategic Funding**

Promotion centered around a custom-designed mascot — a bald eagle with a glorious mullet featured across flyers, social media, and the website. Once the belt arrived, teaser posts lit up online engagement.

Despite a modest budget, the event thrived thanks to strategic partnerships. Three local restaurants provided financial support, and three local salons donated services and judges. Volunteers handled photography and logistics, while a lean staff of four ensured smooth operations.

## **Community Support, Staffing & Financing**

Planned in under six months by four staff and a five-person volunteer team, the Mullet Competition had high impact on a low budget. Every dollar stretched, every partner pitched in, and the result was an unforgettable new tradition. Total expenses were just \$700, with \$200 offset by sponsor donations and \$500 spent on the now-iconic mullet headbands.

The event brought together students, Tourism and Parks staff, local businesses, volunteers, and civic groups. It was supported by the Rotary Club, judged by small business owners, and championed by community leaders — literally, with the Mullet Champion invited to appear at parades, ribbon cuttings, and more.

## **General Excellence, Uniqueness & Results**

This was the first-ever mullet competition hosted by our department, and the enthusiastic response from the community exceeded expectations. Barrett's moment of victory, captured in real time, reflects a blend of tradition, humor, and local pride that few other events achieve. The championship belt, custom-designed for the occasion, added an extra layer of spectacle and authenticity, making this moment truly one-of-a-kind in our department's history.

The Franklin County Mullet Competition wasn't just a hit — it was a legacy in the making. With plans already underway for next year (more categories, more flair, more fun), it's positioned to grow into a signature event. Our advice to other departments?

*Lean into what makes your community unique.* When you embrace local flavor, humor, and heart, you don't just create events — you create belonging.