



# ASHE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

*Sheriff B. Phil Howell*

For Immediate Release  
August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024

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## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Ashe Back 2 School Blast

On Saturday, August 10th, 2024, an estimated 4,000 people visited the Ashe County Sheriff's Office for a "Festival" of our youth. The joint effort of the Ashe County School system, combined with the Ashe County Sheriff's Office, came together again to host our 4th annual Ashe Back 2 School Blast.

The Back 2 School Blast was a BLAST!! Featuring over 60 kid-centered booths and stations, filling the children with fun and excitement. "This was our biggest event yet, providing more supplies and resources than any other. I don't believe there is a school supply event in the state that has made a festival for the kids". ~ Sheriff Howell



*\*Photo courtesy of the Ashe County Sheriff's Office, PIO Tasha Francis*



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Ashe County Schools provided the most booths out of all the vendors, providing all children with community fundraised supplies, school schedules as well as resources for the children who are in need. Each school in Ashe County was represented at the event. Students were provided with their 2024-2025 class schedules and teacher assignments. Teachers and

administrative staff were there to greet new students for the upcoming year. After visiting their school booth, students received a free backpack filled with school supplies to help prepare them for the upcoming school year.

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The Ashe County Sheriff's Office provided the next largest number of stations, focused on community outreach and building relationships between the badge and our youth. K9 demonstrations, as always, were a big hit, allowing families to see how our K9s and their handlers work on a daily basis. The



demonstrations included searching for missing children and finding hidden narcotics. This year, families watched as K9s took down Calico Clint, who robbed Tweetsie Railroad of some gold early that morning. We also had Detention tours where families could come in and see our booking area and a few jail cells. Patrol cars from the ACSO and



West Jefferson Police were stationed in the event for kids to activate the lights and sirens and spend some time in the patrol cars. Students also climbed into S.E.R.V., our Sheriff's Emergency Rescue Vehicle, and got a birds-eye view of the event.



Shoes for Kids, an Ashe County non-profit, provides back-to-school shoes for qualifying students. "The Back 2 School Blast was amazing. Thanks to the Ashe County Sheriff's Office and The Ashe County School System for organizing and hosting the perfect day for Ashe County students. SHOES FOR KIDS was honored to be included! We were able to gift over 1,000

pairs of shoes! Thanks also to all the volunteers who made this day possible. We are ready for next year!" Stated Melody Rector. If you could not attend the event, don't worry; you will be able to see your child's school counselor to receive their shoes.

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Led by Shane Little, Free Haircuts were available to every child. We had a porch full of top-notch cosmetologists who gave the kiddos fresh haircuts and fairy hair to get them geared up for the first day of school. A BIG thank you to Britnie Woods, Toni Roten, Skylar Heart, Tera Blevins, Magaly Lopez, Ashley Hart, Shane, and Marcy Little for their generous donation of time to show love to all our children. Shane Little: "I love what our county does for our children. The support from the Sheriff's Office and Ashe County Schools and all the volunteers giving back is what it's all about. Taking care of our own, and I love being part of our community."



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Badges of Ashe brought the best joy to our kids as we were entertained by watching our favorite people DUNKED in the COLD water tank! The event led off with a local student followed by Sheriff Phil Howell and his lovely wife Amanda, Dr. Francis Amato, Dr. Jeffrey Wetten, Sgt. Brain Blanco, Jack Booth, Courtney Sawyer, James Lanier, Jennifer

DeSpain, Katelynne Hollandsworth, Tiffany Richardson, and the President of BOA, Michelle Greene. You could hear the kids laugh across the parking lot from hitting the target and watching them grin from ear to ear when they saw the slash from the Dunkees hit the water. "We appreciate all our volunteers taking the time to make the kids happy. We look forward to more volunteers from the community next year. Badges of Ashe took in over \$600 in donations." ~ BOA President Michelle Greene



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We have some special thanks to a few groups that donated their equipment, time, and resources to make the event better! The New River Fire Dept grilled hundreds of hot dogs & Ashe County Rotary Club served each child, parent, and volunteer throughout the event. Jefferson Landing provided two golf carts to shuttle folks to and from the event. At the core of the event, David Gambil, with Gambills DJ Service, provided music and entertainment for the day. The kids were dancing throughout the parking lot and having fun with the Dunk Tank music!



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This day was truly amazing. We would like to say Thank You to all the vendors, churches, and volunteers who make this day so special for our kiddos. We know it takes A LOT of hard work and months of preparation to make this event possible. We cannot thank everyone enough. It truly takes a partnership with all of us to pull off such a grand event. It is always a pleasure to help the community and host this event. We wish all students a fun, safe school year. We hope to see you all next year.



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