



Neches River Festival

LXXVI

Join Us for Springtime on the Neches

April 3 – April 13, 2024

Overview and General Information for Duchesses

The Neches River Festival is a time-honored tradition celebrating its 76th year. Family and community have been at the heart of the Neches River Festival from its inception. Since first gathering for the inaugural Festival on the banks of the Neches River in 1949, generations have returned each spring to celebrate the cherished history and exciting future of two of our most valuable resources: our youth and our river.

Supported by this year's theme, "**A River of New Beginnings**," it is the goal of the Neches River Festival to provide our youth with opportunities for many exciting "new beginnings" this year, including making new friends, sharing in new experiences, and learning more about themselves and our community, all while creating memories to last a lifetime.

Each year, we invite young ladies to honor us with their participation as Festival Princesses and Duchesses. Princesses are high school seniors who live or go to school in Beaumont. Duchesses are junior or senior young ladies from outside the Beaumont area who represent their hometown as visiting royalty. Each Princess and Duchess will be formally presented at the Coronation, following which a Royal Court—including a Queen, a First Lady in Waiting, a Second Lady in Waiting, a Third Lady in Waiting, and a Grand Duchess—will be announced. The evening culminates in an enchanted evening of dinner and dancing at the Coronation Ball.

The Festival season begins months before the Coronation with a fun-filled array of events where cherished memories are made. We are excited that our "Capes and Crowns" 5K/1K Fun Run will again partner with Mardi Gras of Southeast Texas. "River Day" returns with the Lower Neches Valley Authority hosting a relaxed day for participants to connect, enjoy, and learn about the Neches River. There is a community parade that culminates in a street party on historic Crocket Street in downtown Beaumont.

Also, during this magical Festival season, a civic leader will be honored as Citizen of the Year, a King will be crowned, and the Knights of the Neches will assemble. There truly is something for everyone to enjoy!

DUCHESSSES

Duchesses are high school juniors or seniors who represent cities outside the Beaumont area in the Festival. These young ladies have been a special part of the Festival since its inaugural year. Duchesses generally have ties to Beaumont through family, acquaintances, camp friends, business, or simply an interest in being a part of the Festival. We treasure the opportunity to welcome Duchesses and their families to Beaumont. Feel free to share information with young ladies who may be interested. We are happy to reach out and send more detailed information to interested parties if you provide us with their contact information. Those who come in from out of town often have more planning and arrangements to make, so providing this information to us early is ideal.

REGISTRATION

Registration forms can be found online at www.nechesriverfestival.com under the FORMS tab. Registration should be completed online (preferred) or by submitting the requested information to the Festival office by **Wednesday, November 1, 2022**. This registration deadline applies to all Festival participants, including Princesses, Duchesses, and Escorts.

FEES

The participation fee for a Duchess is \$350 and can be paid online when registering. Payment in full is due no later than **Sunday, January 21, 2024**. This fee enables a Duchess to enjoy the many Festival events that take place in the spring, which include parties hosted by outside organizations, entry to the Capes and Crowns 5K, tickets to the Get Acquainted Dance, and special seating at the Coronation Ball where an elegant dinner will be served. This fee also includes a keepsake Festival t-shirt and coronation flowers.

Kindly note that registration fees will not be refunded after **February 1, 2024**.

Participation fees do not include tickets to the Coronation or the Ball for family members of a Duchess. Tickets for family and guests will be available to purchase at a later date through Purple Pass. More detailed information regarding the purchase of tickets and the Festival season generally will be provided after registration.

Our goal is for every interested Duchess to participate! Please contact our office for more information if assistance is needed. The deadline to request assistance is **January 8, 2024**.

OPTIONAL INFORMATION MEETING

An Informational Meeting for Princesses will be held on **Sunday, January 21, 2024** at the Julie Rogers Theatre in downtown Beaumont. Duchesses are welcome to attend the Informational Meeting, but they are not expected to do so. We will be sending detailed information regarding the Festival season to Duchesses by mail following registration, and the items we will need from Duchesses can likewise be mailed to the Festival office. Should your schedule enable you to join us for the Informational Meeting, it would be a special treat for us to connect with you at that time, so please let us know if you plan to attend.

DUCHESS ESCORTS

Duchess escorts are junior or senior young men from area high schools who are specifically selected to escort our honored out-of-town Duchesses. Duchess Escorts are typically matched by the Neches River Festival Office. In the event a Duchess has local ties and would like to select her Escort, we are happy to accommodate that request. The Festival is an excellent opportunity to forge new friendships as well as to build on relationships already established!

There is a \$200 fee to participate as a Duchess Escort. This fee is typically paid by the Escort or his family. This fee enables the Escort to enjoy the many Festival events that take place in the spring, including the Coronation Ball. In addition to this fee, Escorts are responsible for the rental of a tuxedo. More details will be provided at the Escort Informational Meeting on **Sunday, January 21, 2024**. For questions regarding Duchess Escorts, please contact the NRF office or Duchess Escort Chairs, **Kirksey Reynolds** at 409.782.7883, kirkseyreynolds@gmail.com and **Lindsey Ramey** at 409.656.9708, lindseyramey1@gmail.com.

KNIGHTS OF THE NECHES

We invite the fathers of our Duchesses to join the Knights of the Neches. The Knights of the Neches is a distinguished group of supporters who ensure the continued success of the Festival. Duchesses whose father are Knights will be presented to the King at a special dinner held on the weekend prior to the Coronation. An online Knight application is available on the Neches River Festival website at www.nechesriverfestival.com under the FORMS tab.

PRINCESS-DUCHESS PAIRS

Each Duchess will be paired with a Princess who will welcome you to Beaumont and be available to answer any questions you may have. If you have a preference regarding a Princess-Duchess match, please provide this information to Duchess Chairmen, **Beth Rogers** at 409.673.2748, bethany_rogers2@att.net and **Julia Crager** at 251.753.7997, atcheson_j@bellsouth.net.

DUCHESS INTERVIEWS

Princesses and Duchesses are asked to participate in a brief interview. Duchesses will have the opportunity to interview on the Saturday morning of the Coronation. There are approximately ten judges who will ask several friendly questions. This is an excellent opportunity to practice interview skills that will be needed in the years to come. The judges are respected members of the community who make this conversation an enjoyable experience. Each year the judges remark how hopeful they are for our future after hearing about your life and plans.

Each Duchess should submit a completed Interview Form included in the registration materials by **Sunday, January 21, 2024**. This form will be provided to the judges on the morning of the interviews. We request that a resume is submitted with the Interview Form, but it is not required.

The selection of a Grand Duchess is based on the interview and information provided by each Duchess. To be selected as a member of the Royal Court is a special honor, but it is not the primary focus or purpose of the Neches River Festival.

SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Neches River Festival Board Scholarships: The Neches River Festival's Executive Board is pleased to provide several scholarship opportunities. Scholarships are awarded on an application basis that takes into account a personal essay, community involvement, and educational goals. One Board Scholarship is specifically reserved for a Duchess. The recipient of this scholarship will receive \$1,000 that can be utilized at any institution of higher learning. The Board Scholarship application can be found on our website www.nechesriverfestival.com under the "ABOUT" tab.

Lamar University Scholarships: The Neches River Festival proudly supports our hometown Lamar University. Princesses, Duchesses, and Escorts may apply for one of the two \$2,500 scholarships awarded each year through the endowed Otho Plummer Scholarship. To apply, the applicant must be admitted to Lamar University and must login to www.lamar.edu/myscholarships with his or her LEA username and LU email password. Once logged in, the applicant can complete the 2023-2024 LU General Scholarship Application and answer "YES" to the question "Did you participate in the Neches River Festival?" More information about Lamar University can be found at www.lamar.edu.

ATTIRE

A highlight of the Festival is the formal presentation of Princesses and Duchesses on the stage of the Julie Rogers Theatre. While much more detailed information regarding attire for Festival events will be provided after registration, as a general matter:

*Princesses wear a white, floor-length presentation gown and elbow-length white gloves.

*Duchesses wear a floor-length presentation gown in the color of their choice and elbow-length white gloves. We kindly ask Duchesses to refrain from wearing a white gown.

The style of gown is your choice. After you are introduced to the audience, your Escort will meet you at the center stage, at which time you will make a formal bow. Please keep in mind that a tight gown or extravagant train could interfere with your bow and presentation.

You can find photos of gowns worn in past years on our website at www.nechesriverfestival.com. Please contact our office if you have questions regarding the selection of a gown or locations where a gown can be purchased.

There will be a number of activities and parties for you to enjoy throughout the Festival season. Appropriate clothing for each event varies. Trust that specific information about attire for each event will be forthcoming.

FORMAL PORTRAITS AND DIGITAL IMAGE

A special keepsake from the Festival is the event program. The program includes formal portraits of each Princess and Duchess, as well as group photos of the Escorts. Each Duchess should provide one

5” x 7” color glossy photograph to be included in the official NRF scrapbook and a digital copy of that portrait for inclusion in the program.

We ask that you submit a “head and shoulder” photograph. Graduation pictures are acceptable only if not in cap and gown. The most flattering pictures are taken in a simple black drape with minimal jewelry. Feathers and bright decorative drapes are discouraged. Outdoor backdrops or those that are solid black or white do not transfer well in the program, so please advise your photographer accordingly.

Photos should be mailed to the Neches River Festival office or brought to the Informational Meeting on January 21, 2024. Either way, the photos must be submitted to the Neches River Festival on or before **January 21, 2024**. Please feel free to contact the NRF office if you would like to see sample photos or programs from previous years.

FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHS

There will be an official Festival photographer at the Ball available to take posed family and group photographs. A pricing sheet with more details will be provided at the Informational Meeting and mailed to all Duchesses.

EVENT ATTENDANCE

We understand that Duchesses who do not live in Southeast Texas will not be able to attend many of the events leading up to the Festival. Even so, you will be sent invitations to all events. We ask that you respond to any invitation that requests a reply.

Please know that we welcome your presence at all events your schedule allows! Please let Duchess Chairmen **Beth Rogers** [409.673.2748, bethany_rogers2@att.net] or **Julia Crager** [251.753.7997, atcheson_j@bellsouth.net] know if you will be attending any event that occurs before the Coronation weekend so that we can connect and welcome you to Beaumont.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media has changed the manner in which we communicate and promote the Festival. We love to see your photos and have the Neches River Festival tagged so that those near and far can enjoy the festivities.

We do ask that participants refrain from posting negative comments about an event, location, host, or participant. Always keep in mind that what is posted online can exist indefinitely. Help us share highlights from the Festival using the following hashtags:

#NRF76
#NRFLXXVI
#ARIVEROFNEWBEGINNINGS
#SPRINGTIME ON THE NECHES

We invite you to join us for Springtime on the Neches as we celebrate Neches River Festival LXXVI. It would be our honor to have you participate in the Festival as a visiting Duchess. It is our hope

that the 76th Neches River Festival will be a highlight of the year and a cherished memory in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Julia Tucker Matheny
Social Chairman LXXVI
409.554.1117
jmathenyNRF76@gmail.com

Molly Moore
Executive Director, Neches River Festival
Office: 409.835.2443
director@nechesrf.com

Beth Rogers
Duchess Chairman

Julia Crager
Duchess Chairman



Twitter: [nechesriverfest](#) / Instagram: [nechesrvrfestival](#) / Facebook: [Neches River Festival](#)

Neches River Festival
2515 Calder Avenue, Suite 400
Beaumont, Texas 77702
www.nechesriverfestival.com