



**For Immediate Release**

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*Photo Attached*

**McDonald named 2025 NC Apple Festival Ambassador**

**Hendersonville, NC** - Ryah McDonald, a rising senior at East Henderson High School, has been named Apple Ambassador for the 2025 North Carolina Apple Festival. The Apple Ambassador program provides two scholarships each year and is open to all rising seniors in Henderson County. McDonald will attend all four days of the festival and will also represent the festival at the NC Mountain State Fair as well as other events across the state throughout the year.

Ryah is the daughter of Brian and Toni McDonald. She will be awarded a \$2,000 college scholarship upon graduation from high school in May 2026. After graduation, she plans to attend a four year University and receive a bachelor's degree in Nursing, which she will later use to become a Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA).

"I feel incredibly honored and grateful to be selected as this year's Apple Ambassador. This recognition is not only a personal milestone, since I've dreamed about this since I was a little girl but also a celebration of our community's rich agricultural heritage and the hard working Apple Growers who make this festival thrive. I am proud to represent such a vibrant and dedicated community and I look forward to representing the Apple Grower's Association and my hometown, Henderson County!"

This year's runner-up is Lillyana Galloway, a rising senior at East Henderson High School. She will be awarded a \$1,500 college scholarship, an increase from previous years. The Apple Festival Board recently voted to increase the runner-up award due to the amount of volunteer hours they contribute to the festival.

Reagan Price and Sutton Hughes, of West Henderson High School; Elliot Jackson and Sarah Orr, of Hendersonville High School; and Selah Masterson and Sharlotte Lyda of North Henderson High School were also chosen to represent their schools for interviews and to join McDonald and Galloway at the festival and on this year's apple ambassador float.

Applicants for the scholarship are required to submit their transcripts, list of activities, provide letters of recommendation and write an essay on the Apple Festival and the importance of the apple industry to this area. The Apple Ambassador is selected based on this information and through an interview process.

The Apple Ambassador and runner-up are awarded the Evelyn Lutz Hill Memorial Scholarship. This scholarship honors Hill, who served as the Secretary of the North Carolina Apple Growers for many years. The Apple Ambassador sponsor is Champion Comfort Experts, a new addition for the festival.

The Apple Festival is held every year over Labor Day weekend. This year it will be August 29 – September 1 in downtown Hendersonville.

### **About the NC Apple Festival**

The mission of the North Carolina Apple Festival is to celebrate and promote the significance of apples, apple growers, and the apple industry to Henderson County and the state of North Carolina. Through a vibrant, family-friendly event held annually over Labor Day weekend, the Festival fosters community pride, supports local agriculture, and showcases the rich heritage and economic impact of apple production in our region. The 2025 event will mark the 79th annual celebration of the Henderson County Apple Festival.

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