



Courtesy Fayetteville Area CVB

Fayetteville, N.C., is home to Fort Bragg, and its military ties are omnipresent.

A Cape Fear River town that lives its slogan of “History, Heroes and Hometown Feeling” is Fayetteville, N.C., home to the U.S. Army’s Fort Bragg.

By 2011, Army Forces Command Headquarters and Reserves Command will relocate to the facility, making it by far the nation’s largest military installation in terms of people and land size.

“We’re proud to be a military community,” said John Meroski, president and CEO of the Fayetteville Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. “Our history runs from pre-Revolutionary

War times through being home to men and women that defend our freedoms today. That’s a pretty strong story.”

Meetings at Fort Bragg’s NCO and Officers Clubs can be enlivened with tours that feature parachute-packing demonstrations and dinners with soldiers in the mess hall.

A related off-site venue, the Airborne and Special Operations Museum, tells the story of the Army’s elite forces from 1942 to the present. Docents who are Army veterans breathe “I was there” life into guided tours. Galleries or the entire museum can be booked for events.

Not everything in Fayetteville is focused on military life. Outdoor happenings rule on the Great Lawn at 79-acre Cape Fear Botanical Garden. A visitors pavilion to open in the fall will feature a 28,500-square-foot garden and orangery, or greenhouse, seating 400.

Groups that opt to meet in Fayetteville will benefit from the \$24 million that has been invested in new and upgraded meeting facil-



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Events can be held at the Airborne and Special Operations Museum, which tells the story of the U.S. Army’s elite forces.

ities in the past two years.

Among the improved properties is the 289-room Holiday Inn Bordeaux, which spent \$4 million to renovate its guest rooms and meeting rooms, including a 10,380-square-foot ballroom.

The Crown Center, a complex of four buildings, remains the city’s largest meeting venue. The center has 92,000 square feet of meeting space and a coliseum that seats 11,000.

When his wrestling tournaments outgrew the local high-school gym, Marty Bartram, president, owner and head coach of the Rhino Wrestling Club in

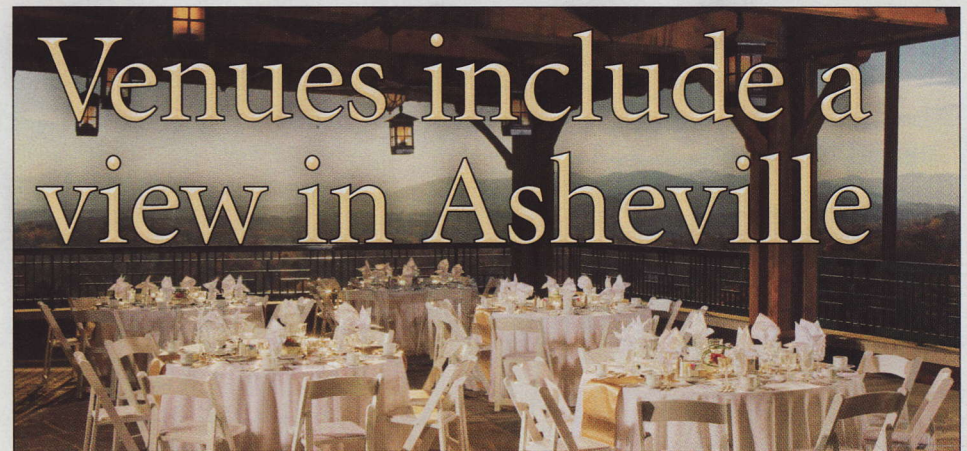
Fayetteville, looked to expand to the Crown Center for a November 2008 meet for 2,000 athletes.

“Karen Long, the center’s acting CEO, walked us through the entire process,” said Bartram. “She listened to why we wanted to do things a certain way and made things happen. The CVB even purchased 10 mats so we could hold larger events.

“Because of the Crown and the CVB, we have been able to continue running these events for kids,” Bartram said.

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Courtesy Grove Park Inn

Grove Park Inn last year added the Mountain View Pavilion, which is adjacent to a meeting room with similar views of Asheville and the mountains beyond.

Asheville, N.C., will open five new hotels this year, including the 104-room Grand Bohemian, across from the Biltmore Estate, and the boutique Hotel Indigo in downtown.

Quality of life fuels the city’s growth, according to Tim Lampkin, director of sales and group services for the Asheville Convention and Visitors Bureau.

“You come to Asheville, and somehow, somewhere, you’re going to have an

enriching experience,” he said.

Meetings tend to return, as evidenced by the Georgia Society of Association Executives, which held an annual meeting for 250 at the Asheville Renaissance Hotel after having a symposium for 40 CEOs at the Grove Park Inn and Resort in 2007. The group has decided to meet at the Renaissance every year, according to Wendy Kavanagh, executive director.

“Asheville’s CVB has such a strong relationship with their properties” she