

Where Music **Meets Mission**



With its new home at Ferngrove, Bear Shadow joins forces with Stage4Hope to create a festival space rooted in intention and impact.

For the first time in its history, the Bear Shadow Music Festival has a permanent home — and it’s one shaped as much by intention as by landscape.

Beginning in 2026, the festival will take place at Ferngrove, an 85-acre property just seven minutes from downtown Highlands, tucked off Old Dillard Road. The land belongs to Stacy Carter, and it is also the heart of her nonprofit, Stage4Hope — a mission that now intersects meaningfully with Bear Shadow’s future.

Ferngrove is envisioned as far more than a festival site. It is the long-term home of

Stage4Hope, a nonprofit created to address the often invisible gaps cancer patients face, particularly the cost and logistics of traveling to major treatment centers, and the lack of mental health services for cancer patients and their caregivers. Since its founding, Stage4Hope has been entirely underwritten by Carter herself. To date, most operational costs, and all land acquisition, and construction have been paid for through her personal funds, underscoring how deeply personal the mission is.

After selling her land-surveying business in 2020, Carter was diagnosed with lung cancer in 2023. Navigating treatment

opened her eyes to how many patients lack access to basic support systems.

“I was blessed in a way that allowed me to see what doesn’t exist for so many people,” Carter says. “This is something God laid on my heart to do, and I’m grateful I’ve been able to carry it forward.”

The Stage4Hope Retreat and Wellness Center is actively taking shape. Roads, entrances, utilities and the administration building are currently under construction, and in the planning are a chapel, guest house and wellness center.

The wellness center, a cornerstone of the nonprofit’s retreat and support program-

ming, will begin construction immediately following the Bear Shadow Music Festival and is expected to be completed in time for the following year.

For now, that portion of the property has been intentionally paused to accommodate the festival footprint.

That pause reflects the spirit of the partnership with Bear Shadow Music Festival, which is designed as a long-term collaboration rather than a one-time solution. After Bear Shadow lost its previous venue, conversations began about creating a permanent home that could grow with the festival. Together, organizers and Carter reimaged traffic flow, grading, and access — even acquiring additional land — to ensure the site could comfortably support future festivals.

In 2026, the grounds will feature two stages: Bear Shadow’s main stage and a dedicated Stage4Hope stage housed under a large tent. That tent will serve as both a performance space and a gathering point throughout the weekend, hosting music during set breaks and spotlighting emerging

artists.

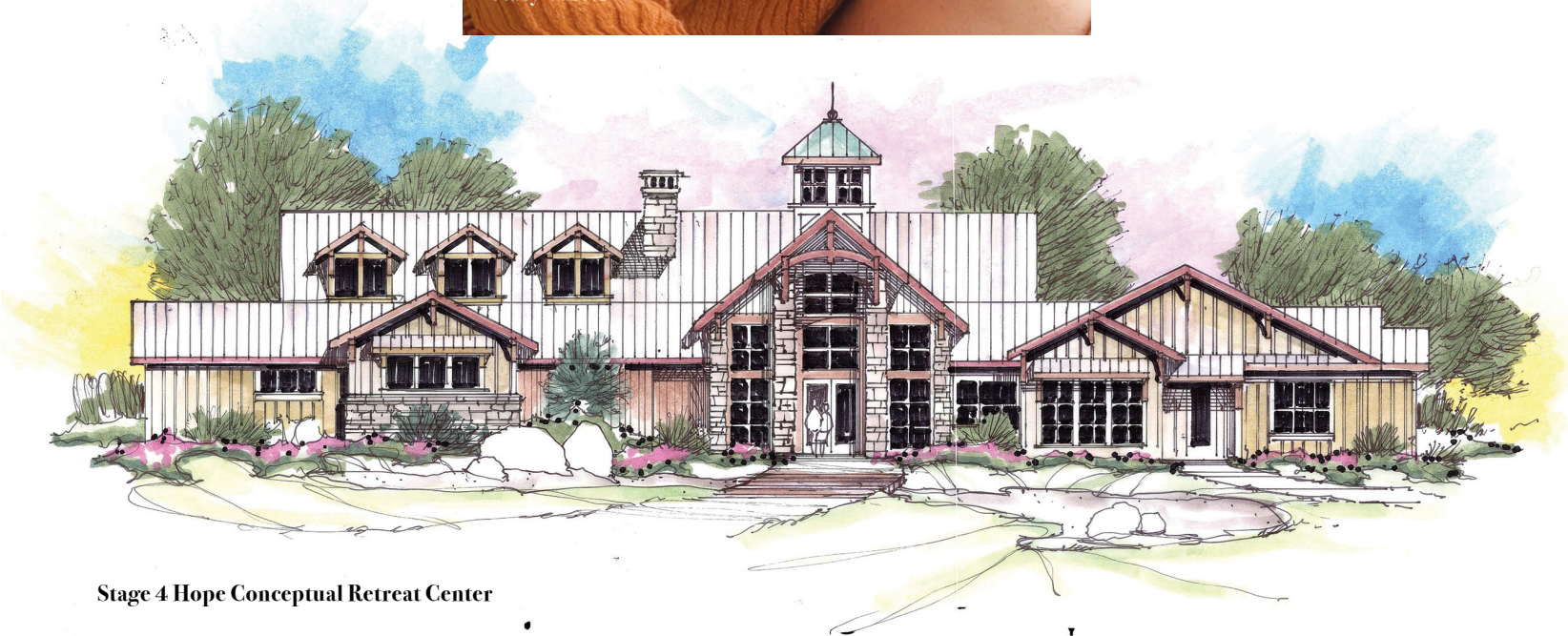
Friday night anchors the fundraising effort. A special Stage4Hope event will take place that evening, with all proceeds directed toward funding patient travel. The event is included for VIP Weekender guests, with a limited number of individual

tickets available, keeping the experience intentionally intimate. Earlier that night, Carter will host a small, invitation-only gathering at her newly completed home on the property, designed to connect donors more personally to the mission.

Looking ahead, both organizations see Ferngrove as a place with room to grow — literally and creatively. As Stage4Hope’s campus is completed and infrastructure expands, the collaboration creates opportunities for additional side events in future years, from smaller performances and donor gatherings to wellness-focused programming that can live alongside the festival weekend. It’s a model built for longevity, allowing Bear Shadow to deepen its footprint while giving Stage4Hope a public-facing platform rooted in community, music, and shared purpose.

If you’d like to learn more, visit bearshadownc.com and stage4hope.org.

by Marlene Osteen



Stage 4 Hope Conceptual Retreat Center