



Case study



The First College to Deploy Evolv, Cape Fear Community College Renews Evolv Relationship for Improved Efficiency and Guest Experience

Snapshot of Wilson Center

AFFILIATED COLLEGE: Cape Fear Community College

LOCATION: Wilmington, NC

FULL NAME: Allan & Laura Wilson Humanities and Fine Arts Center

CAPACITY: 1,502

SPACE: 159,000 Square Feet

SECURITY AND GUEST EXPERIENCE STAFF: ~40 full- and part-time

PREVIOUS SECURITY SYSTEM: Manual bag and body checks

Solution Snapshot

Goals

- Enhance the efficacy of security screening
- Replace manual, intrusive security screening with a touchless process
- Reallocate guest experience staff and volunteers to other guest experience tasks
- Migrate from 2 Evolv Edge® systems to 1 Evolv Express® system for improved efficiency and efficacy
- Deliver great security ingress experience to guests

Solution

People

- Evolv Solutions Engineer conducted a site survey before both Evolv deployments
- Evolv Customer Success Manager provided training with Express system deployment and ongoing support and guidance

Technology

- 1 Evolv Express dual-lane system
- Evolv Insights®

Process

- Deployed 2 Evolv Edge single-lane systems (2019)
- Migrated to 1 Evolv Express dual-lane system (2023)
- CFCC Wilson Center security team received onsite training
- Security team leveraged the Evolv Academy for online training and Evolv certifications
- Regularly leverage The Bridge Community for new ideas, best practices, and thought leadership content

Outcomes



Reduced number of staff required for security screening from 12 to 4



Identified and tagged 47 firearms since deploying the Express system in 2023



Cut average time for secondary security checks to 10 to 15 seconds—a 200% reduction



Eliminated security queues during last-minute rush, ensuring guests are in their seats when shows start



Enhanced guest experience, improving survey ratings by INSERT%



Increased velocity of screening throughput and guest ingress



Increased time in concessions—and revenue from sales—before the start of shows



Focused weapon detection insights streamline secondary screening experience



Access to screening analytics anytime, anywhere using the Evolv mobile app



Leveraged the smaller footprint of the Express system to streamline activation of security screening before each show

From ZZ Top Event Volunteer to Guest Experience Specialist

A few years after Norman Berth wrapped up a successful career in law enforcement as a deputy sheriff in an Illinois county just outside of Chicago, he and his wife relocated to Wilmington, North Carolina.

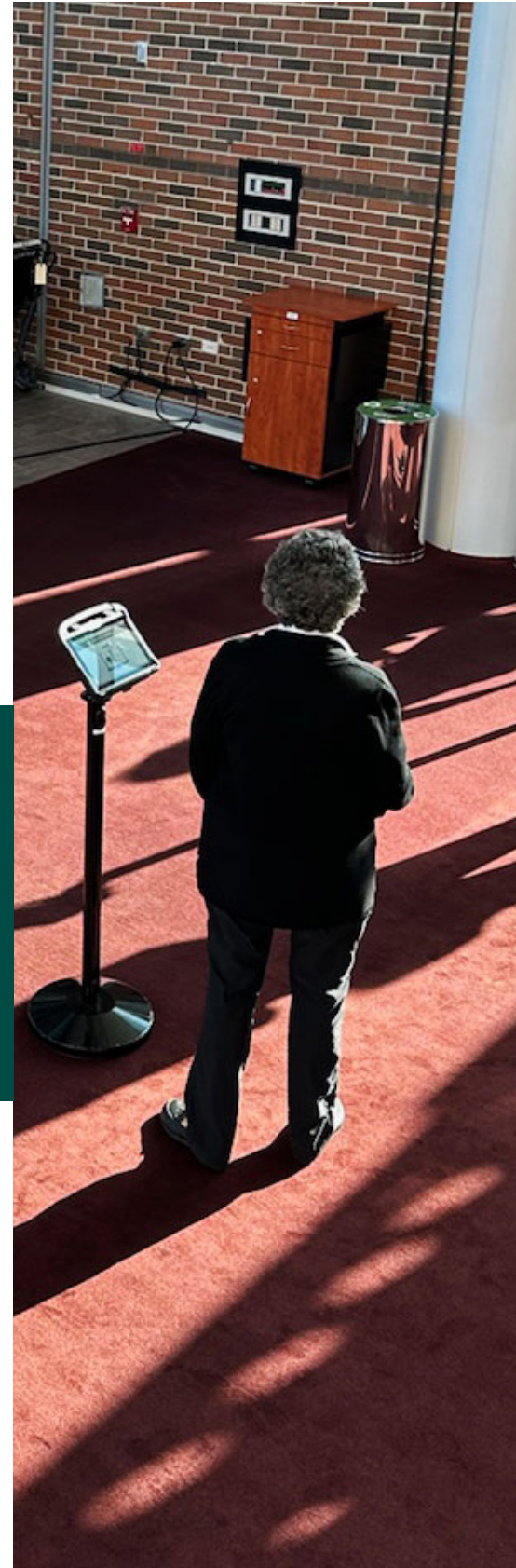
ZZ Top was performing at the Cape Fear Community College (CFCC) Wilson Center in 2017, and he wanted to attend the event. He signed up as a guest experience volunteer, and he decided after the event to begin volunteering on a regular basis.

The Wilson Center was seeking to enhance security operations and Berth was offered a part-time position as a guest experience specialist. "I had just turned 65 and wasn't looking for a full-time position," Berth says. "But the opportunity to give back to the community and the Wilson Center was quite attractive."

“

We wanted to move beyond a manual security screening process that required a huge amount of staff time and failed to deliver the experience we wanted to provide guests.”

- Norm Berth, Guest Experience Specialist,
CFCC Wilson Center



A Trip to the Lincoln Center Spurs Innovation

When Norm started in his new role, the Wilson Center employed manual bag checks to screen incoming guests of the 1,502-seat performing arts center.

Every guest entering the center had to empty out their pockets and open up their bags for checking, a cumbersome experience for both security staff and guests. “We wanted to move beyond a manual security screening process that required a huge amount of staff time and failed to deliver the experience we wanted to provide guests,” Berth notes. “For each event, we ran four security screening tables for bag and body checks that required 12 staff to manage—two for each table and another three or four to oversee their management. It was a time- and resource-intensive process.”

In early 2019, the former Director of the Wilson Center attended an event at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts in New York City and went through their security screening system, the first model of the Evolv Edge (the Lincoln Center was Evolv’s first customer and has subsequently upgraded to Evolv Express systems), he immediately told Berth that he needed to fly up to see the system in action for himself. “I was immediately impressed with the touchless security screening process,” Berth relates. “I returned to Wilmington as a big proponent and embarked on an effort to secure funding approval to purchase two Evolv systems.”

“Evolv gives us a touchless experience that screens for weapons of all shapes and sizes and locations on a person’s body or bags.”

– Norm Berth, Guest Experience Specialist, CFCC Wilson Center





Getting Started with Evolv

Given Berth's experience and the high value CFCC places on the safety of its students and patrons, funding did not take long.

Two Edge systems arrived on campus in June 2019. A Solutions Engineer from Evolv worked with Berth to configure both systems and to train the guest experience staff at the Wilson Center on how to operate them. "We have around 40 guest experience staff, and volunteers involved in security.

It was a seamless process training them on the Edge. It literally took about 30 minutes to train them on how to use the systems and the workflows we established around them."

“ [We] went through online training on the Evolv Academy beforehand. Having this online training available helped set the stage for the deployment of the Express.”

- Norm Berth, Guest Experience Specialist, CFCC Wilson Center

Renewing the Relationship with Evolv

When the Evolv Express became available in 2021, Berth and other members of the CFCC Wilson Center team took a close look at the new technology and were sold out of the gate.

“Due to the relationship we have with Evolv and the success we had as an early adopter of the technology, we didn’t look at alternatives to the Express,” he says. “The relationship has also evolved over time, and Evolv has added operational infrastructure and processes to ensure we get the support we need. For example, we now have a Customer Success Manager who serves as a single point of contact, so someone who is always available to provide guidance and answer our questions.”

Tripp Harmon, Evolv’s Associate Customer Success Manager, summarizes the relationship with the CFCC Wilson Center team in the following way: “Ever since my first call with Norm [Berth], it has been a great pleasure working with him and the Wilson Center team. I always welcome his calls and emails, whether he has questions or simply wants to pick my brain. The fact that he once described our relationship as having me on ‘speed dial’ demonstrates the level of synergy that exists between the two organizations. In addition, because the Wilson Center has experience with both the Edge and Express systems, they are a unique customer and one we value immensely.”

Yet while the CFCC Wilson Center team vetted and approved the migration over to the Express dual-lane system in 2021, the decision to move over to an Express system was delayed due to the COVID-19 shutdown and other priorities until June 2023.

“ I have the Evolv mobile app on my phone. I can access the Evolv Portal at any time and from anywhere I am. The reports contain highly useful information such as the total number of guests and when they entered, down to five-minute increments, as well as threats detected and types of items tagged. These are quite informative.”

- Norm Berth, Guest Experience Specialist,
CFCC Wilson Center



Migrating to the Evolv Express[®]

In June 2023, the project took flight.

The migration process was overseen by an Evolv Solutions Engineer who guided the team through the setup of the Express system and then trained the Wilson Center team on its operation. This included updates to security operating procedures (SOPs). “Our team also went through online training on the Evolv Academy beforehand,” Berth reports. “Having this online training available helped set the stage for the deployment of the Express system. There are new capabilities in the Express system, such as tagging objects, that are an area of focus for us.” Berth also uses The Bridge, Evolv’s online customer community, to access content for new ideas, best practices, and to find technical details needed for the ongoing management of the Express system.

As part of this process, all of the Wilson Center guest experience staff involved with security are certified on the Evolv Express. “We employ a small number of permanent staff and rely on volunteers for the remainder of our staffing needs,” Berth explains. Evolv fits these staffing requirements well. “The response from our staff, both employees and volunteers, to the Express deployment has been very positive,” Berth continues. “They especially like the Evolv tablet and the red box that highlights the location of the possible threat. It tells them exactly where they need to look versus before.”

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Rapid, Seamless Screening of Guests and Better Security

Most shows at the Wilson Center start at 7:30 PM, and doors open at 6:30 PM.

With the previous manual screening process, hundreds of guests would quickly form in lines before the entrance to the Wilson Center, and getting through security screening could take up to 15 minutes. These wait queues could delay start times and prevent many from visiting concessions before heading to their seats. Even after the two Edge systems were deployed, the last-minute rush of guests before show start times created queues of guests in front of the entrance to the Wilson Center, waiting to walk through slowly and one by one.

The deployment of the Express solved these challenges. "Guests no longer need to file through security screening in a single lane, but rather couples and families can walk through security screening side by side," Berth comments. "This makes the screening process faster and even more seamless for them."

The wider mats for the Express system are also a plus, making the system accessible to all demographics visiting the theater. "We can get virtually everything, such as wheelchairs and walkers, through an Express lane," Berth adds. "This is an important requirement for any performing arts center."

Even though the CFCC Wilson Center team had several years running the Edge system, the experience with the Express system made an indelible impact. "Tammy Daniels, Senior Managing Director at the Wilson Center, who has been there since we deployed the Edge system, told me she had 'happy tears' during the first night with the Express system," Harmon relates. "To her, she indicated the migration spoke volumes on how Evolv listens to customer feedback and does its best to implement changes to enhance its technology."

More Time for Concessions Increased Revenue

With the manual screening process and even with the Edge systems, guests struggled to get to their seats in time for the start of shows.

This reduced the number of guests who could visit concessions and thus the amount of revenue generated from concessions. This has changed with the Express. “Because we can screen guests and get them into the Wilson Center faster with the Express, we have seen an increase in concession sales,” Berth says. “This translates into a better experience for our guests while driving higher revenue for the Wilson Center.”

Simplicity is Key

“Once we got the Express system in place, we were blown away with its enhanced capabilities,” Berth continues.

“The smaller footprint of the Express over the Edge was a big selling point. With the Edge systems, we had to move them each time we tore down after an event and then move and set them up again before each event. For the Express system, the footprint is much smaller and we simply need to plug in the Express tower and hook up the tablets to it. We no longer need to move the systems each time.”

Because the Wilson Center has experience with both the Edge and Express systems, they are a unique customer and one we value immensely.”

- Tripp Harmon, Assoc. Customer Success Manager,
Evolv

Improved Accuracy of Weapons Detection

The Express utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) to continuously learn from items passing the system and being tagged, enabling new updates to be pushed regularly to improve screening.

Berth attests to this, seeing the percentage of nuisance alarms reduced as time goes by. “The AI enables self-learning,” Berth observes. “As our staff tags items as nuisance alarms, the Express becomes more and more accurate in its detection. We now pick up what we want—basically guns—and not the other items. There are obviously other objects such as large knives that set off alarms, which we also want to catch.”

Harmon adds to Berth’s comments: “Norm [Berth] stated in our Voice of the Customer survey that their goal is to ‘catch the gun’ at the door, and this is what the Express system has aimed to do for the Wilson Center. Since the Express went live, we have detected and tagged 47 firearms.”

Deterrence is a related benefit Berth associates with Evolv. “We have signs at our entrance alerting everyone that we have a no-exception firearm policy,” he relates. “We regularly see some of our guests reach those signs, turn around, return to their vehicle, and deposit their gun there.”

“Guests no longer need to file through security screening in a single lane but rather couples and families can walk through security screening side by side. This makes the screening process faster and even more seamless for them.”

– Norm Berth, Guest Experience Specialist, CFCC Wilson Center



Delivering the Experience Guests Want

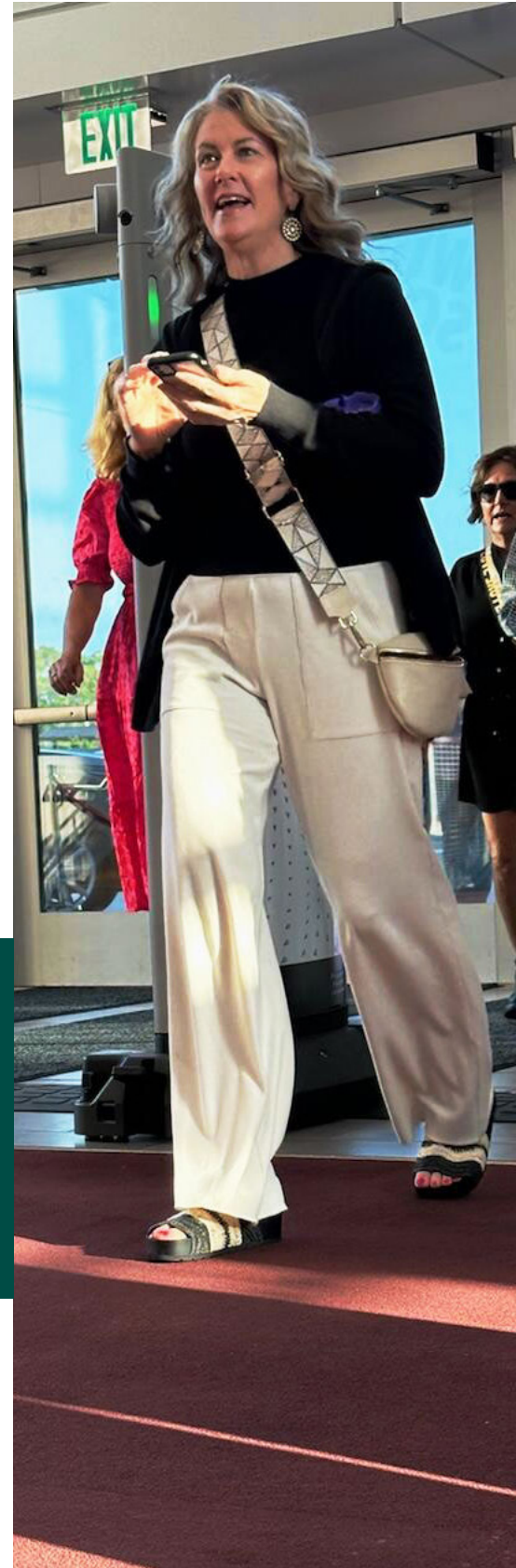
The queues that accumulated before the manual screening process were reduced with the Edge systems.

But guests would still form in front of the Edge systems 10 or 15 minutes before the start of shows. “In these instances, we had to allocate an extra staff member to serve as a traffic cop—telling guests to proceed when the green light lit up and to stop when the yellow light appeared on the Edge systems. This is no longer needed with the Express.”

When a potential threat is detected on a guest, the red box on the Evolv tablet shows Wilson Center security staff the location on the body or bag where it was detected. This capability was not available in the Edge and is making a big difference. “The process for those guests who are flagged is much less intrusive,” Berth explains. “Plus, as we are able to focus on one location for resolution, so the entire check is much faster.” Previously, with the Edge systems, it took around 45 to 60 seconds to locate and resolve a threat. This was reduced by around 200% to 10 to 15 seconds.

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- Norm Berth, Guest Experience Specialist,
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Improved Operational Efficiency

With manual screening, the CFCC Wilson Center team required 12 staff.

"Every incoming guest had to be checked manually," Berth says. "It was an extremely tedious process. For the Express, two security staff members serve in Flow Control roles greeting incoming guests and flagging those who set off alarms, directing them to the Alert Resolution area. Volunteer staff serve in the Flow Control roles, while full-time security staff serve in the Alert Resolution roles. We have been able to take the staff we no longer need for security ingress and reallocate them to other areas in the Wilson Center to enhance guest experience and security elsewhere." See Table 1 for details.

	Previous Manual Process	2 Evolv Edge systems	1 Evolv Express dual-lane system
Guests Processed Per Hour	1,500	3,000	4,600
Staff to Manage	12	4	4

Table 1. Comparison of different security screen systems

Leveraging Insights On the Go

Berth indicates he is just getting started with Evolv Insights analytics.

"I have the Evolv mobile app on my phone," he says. "I can access the Evolv Portal any time and from anywhere I am at. The reports contain highly useful information such as the total number of guests and when they entered down to five-minute increments, as well as threats detected and types of items tagged. These are quite informative." Berth's team reports that these capabilities, powered by AWS' Elastic Cloud Compute (or EC2) service, have been a big help, enabling them to look at data in real time and see how traffic flow and threat alarms on a Friday night event compare to those on a Sunday afternoon. All historical data is stored in the cloud using AWS' Relational Database Service, allowing the dataset to grow by the day.

“ One of the guest experience managers at the Wilson Center, who has been there since we deployed the Edge system, told me she had ‘happy tears’ during the first night with the Express system. To her, she indicated the migration spoke volumes on how Evolv listens to customer feedback.”

- Tripp Harmon, Assoc. Customer Success Manager, Evolv



Intangibles of a Vendor Relationship

The intangibles of the relationship Berth and the CFCC Wilson Center team have with Evolv are a real plus.

"We value the relationship with the Evolv team," Berth says. "For example, earlier this year, when we decided to reposition the Express system to create more space in the lobby and had questions about how close we could place it to the door, Tripp had the answer for us."

Berth is very proud of the fact that the CFCC Wilson Center was the first college to deploy Evolv. "It has been a few years since we made the decision, and we have never looked back," he says. "When we made the decision to upgrade from the Edge system to the Express system, I was really excited about doing so. I remember going through an Express system when visiting a museum in a nearby state and stopping to take a photo of the Express system they were using so that I could show it to the team when I returned to town."

This trailblazing empowered Berth to be a leading voice for safety and security in the region. Guests to the CFCC Wilson Center include those responsible for managing other venues in the area that could benefit from Evolv. Some currently rely on manual screening processes, like the Wilson Center did before implementing their first Evolv system, and some utilize legacy metal detectors that generate a lot of friction and inconvenience for their guests and security operators. "We welcome the chance to showcase our Evolv deployment to other venues," Berth notes. "The expansion of Evolv's footprint in our community makes us all feel safer."

When asked to cite what he appreciates most about Evolv, Berth cites Evolv's push for continual innovation at the top of the list. "We appreciate the fact that Evolv adds new capabilities to its solution and listens to customers like ourselves for feedback and ideas," he concludes. "We are very pleased with the relationship and its evolution since becoming a customer."

“The relationship has evolved over time, and Evolv has added operational infrastructure and processes to ensure we get the support we need. For example, we now have a Customer Success Manager who serves as a single point of contact, so someone who is always available to provide guidance and answer our questions.”

- Norm Berth,
Guest Experience Specialist,
CFCC Wilson Center



Contact us to learn more about helping to create
safer zones where you live, learn, work, or play.

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