

Sorghum...from Page 1A

and friends, and in this case, thousands of friends.

The Blairsville Sorghum Festival attracts countless repeat visitors year after year, who come to the Northeast Georgia Mountains to enjoy the fall colors and grab a few jars of that sweet Mountain sorghum.

This year, the sorghum crop was a bumper crop, said co-organizer Kim Bridges.

"The last few years, we've run out of sorghum syrup before the festival was over because we simply didn't have enough cane crop," Bridges said. "This year, we expect to have more than enough sorghum syrup to

go around."

One major change for the festival this year involves the parade route. There was an alteration that saved time, manpower and money, Bridges said.

Parade organizer Vanna Chambers advises that the 48th Annual Sorghum Festival Parade has an "old twist."

For a number of years, the parade route makes its way from the Old Middle School Gym to Cleveland Street, then three quarters of the way around the Blairsville Square and onto Blue Ridge Street.

The difference this

year is, instead of hanging a right toward the Blairsville Restaurant and onto Georgia 515, the 2017 Sorghum Festival Parade will go on down to Hunt-Martin Street and make a left, then continue back to Cleveland Street.

Once there, the parade will wind its way up Kimsey Street, then to England Street on up to where it started at the Old Middle School Gym.

"This will get people back in town," Bridges said. "I think it's going to go over good, and it helps with the traffic situation. Getting it off the four-lane was a big deal. It makes it easier for a lot of people, especially the public safety folks."

The Blairsville Sorghum Festival Parade is always a fun community activity, as residents from Union County and the surrounding areas line the city streets to cheer on the creativity of festival float builders.

This year's parade theme is "We Salute Our Union County Farmers," where float builders are being asked to express their inner farmer and go all out in the name of fun.

Who doesn't want to be a farmer? We all have a little farmer in us that likes to come out now and then. Get your floats ready and bring out the farmer in you and your organization.

This year's grand marshals will feature Hall of Fame farmers in honor of the theme.

The Hall of Famers include Clyde and IT Harkins, Hoyt Hamby, Janie and Ronnie Dyer, and more are expected, Bridges said.

Everyone is encouraged to participate—clubs, churches, businesses, individuals, everyone. No application is needed to enter parade, according to the website.

"We will be giving cash prizes for First, Second and Third Place float winners. This is a great way for nonprofit organizations, local charities and churches to raise funds.

"Business and personal floats are welcome to participate, and will be given the choice of what local charity or organization they would like to donate prize money to should they be chosen as a winner."

Prize money is for parade floats only, according to the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Club, and prizes are \$300 for First Place, \$200 for Second Place and \$100 for Third Place.

"Floats will be judged on their creativity, amount of work involved, and how well it represents the parade theme," according to the club.

Meeting place for the parade is still at the Old Middle



The ever popular Biskit Eatin' contest at the Sorghum Festival. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

School Gym, according to the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Club. Floats must be registered at entry of the ballfield and complete by 9:30 a.m. Judging will begin at 10 a.m.

Meanwhile, Bridges has a lot invested in the Blairsville Sorghum Festival—17 years to be exact. She said she has loved every minute because of what the event does for the community.

"It helps a lot of people," she said. "We make a lot of donations to the recreation ball clubs every year, we give to the Ferst Foundation that gives

books out to kids, we give a big donation out to Union County Family Connection.

"We did more than \$6,500 in scholarships for the school kids last year," she said. "That's on top of helping folks in the community that are having hard times. At times, we've helped folks that have medical bills stacked up.

"We don't do this for the recognition, we just try to make a difference in our community," she said. "It makes us feel good when we see how many people it has helped."

Indian Summer Festival 40th Anniversary

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The 40th Indian Summer Festival was off to a bustling start on Day One with a festive atmosphere and a steady flock of visitors throughout the day before culminating with a rousing good time at the annual square dance held that night at the Suches Community Center.

When it was all said and done on Saturday, the first day had drawn more than 5,000 attendees to the festival.

On Day Two, however, See *Indian Summer, Page 7A*

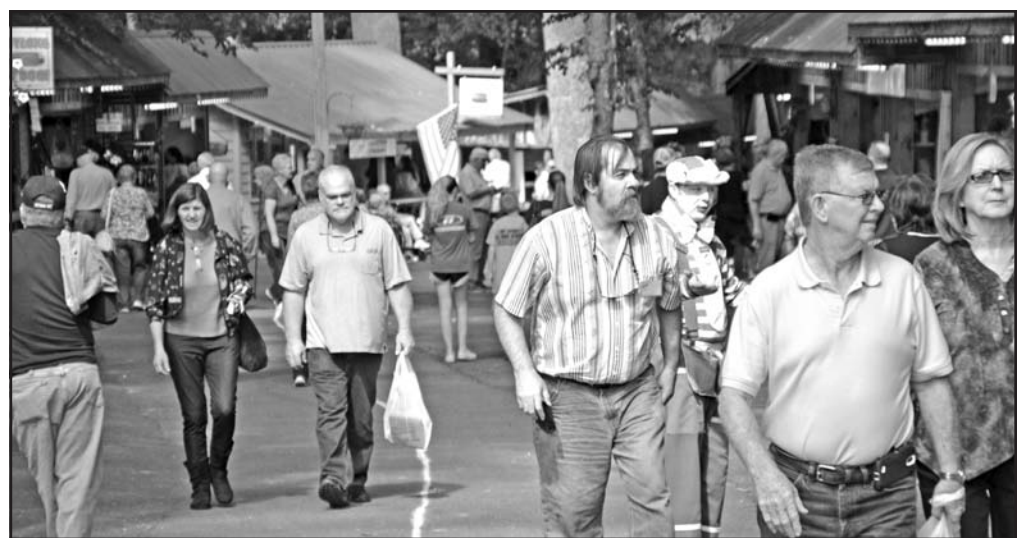


The "Run Above the Clouds" taking off for a beautiful run around Suches on Saturday, Oct. 7. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Each year, homemade goods abound during the festival. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Fall Festival...from Page 1A



The Fall Festival is a great way for visitors to the area to contribute to the regional economy.

"Then we also have the helicopter rides on the weekends. We've had that before," she said. "Then we have some new arts and crafts. We have a great new pottery lady that's coming, Donna Kay from Helen, Georgia. She goes around the lake and picks up driftwood and collects it and puts it on the pottery. It's so unique and different from anything I've ever seen. It is beautiful."

The Festival also includes the ever-popular Flower Show, scheduled to be at noon on Friday, Oct. 13.

And, of course, there is music. The Bellamy Brothers, Bill Anderson, Brenda Lee, Ricky Skaggs & Kentucky Thunder, Peter Noone with Herman's Hermits, Claire Lynch Band, Mountain Heart, and Wyatt Espalin will perform during the nine-day Festival.

The music doesn't stop there. Jim Wood and the Georgia Mountain Fair Band, The Isaacs, The Perrys, Mark Bishop, Tammie Davis, Davenport Brothers, Stephen Lee Band, and Blairsville's own, Raven and Red also will perform at the Festival.

And brace yourself, the Georgia State Fiddlers Convention takes place and kicks off Friday, Oct. 20 in Anderson Music Hall. Categories include beginning fiddler, harmonica, buck dancing, dulcimer, Dobro, old-time banjo, junior fiddler and senior fiddler. Winners will be declared. "Official Georgia State Champions."

"The Fiddler's Convention is going to be the last weekend (Oct. 20 and Oct. 21)," Thomason said. "We have no idea how many people will be competing this year, but we have about 30 different categories that they can compete in. A lot of times people will walk up and register right before show time. But it's always a big deal, a very big deal for the festival. And at the end of all of it, the contestants will fiddle off for the title Georgia State Fiddle King on Saturday night (Oct. 21)."

Last year, Tim "Tbone" Daniels stepped into the spotlight onstage at the Anderson Music Hall and became the 2016 Fiddle King during the Annual Georgia Fiddlers' Convention.

Other winners in last year's Convention included:

First Place for Mandolin, Greg Fleming of Canton, First Place for Banjo, Weston Stewart of Anderson, Alabama; First Place for Flat Pick Guitar, Alan Shag; First Place for Finger Style Guitar, Kyle Coomes of Comer; First Place for Bluegrass Band, Archer Grass from Blue Ridge; and First Place for Junior Fiddler, Ivy Phillips from Chapmansboro, Tennessee.

Here is a list of previous Fiddle Kings and Queens that include 2009, Bryan McDowell, 2010, McDowell again, 2011, Johnny Ray Watts, 2012, Kenny Lambert, 2013 Emma DeJarnette, 2014, DeJarnette again, 2015, Jacob Johnson, and 2016, Tbone Daniels.

Admission to the Festival is \$12 (Children 12 and under get in free); a Three-Day Pass is \$33 (available at the gate); and a Fun Fair Pass is \$90 (for all 9 Days).

For nine days, the Georgia Mountain Fall Festival will serenade, court, woo, challenge and generally entertain regulars and guests alike that are here enjoying the North Georgia Mountains.