

Shucks...from Page 1A

"The Fastest Five format was okay, but I like trying to shuck as many ears as I can in one minute," Collins said. "The Fastest Five is over too soon, and it lets all the drama out of the bag," he said. "I guess it really just takes too much of the fun out of it."

Shirley Spencer of Spencer Honey, Booth 49, of Blairsville, finished second. Judy Berry of Berry's Honey Farm, Booth 35, of Blairsville, finished third, Pat Lorenz, of Granny's Smokehouse, Booth 47, of Blairsville, finished fourth.

In the Youth Division, Amanda Frantz of Cleveland, beat reigning Youth Champion Trent Kerr, 11, of Blairsville at the wire of the Fastest Five competition.

"I don't know, I thought I had her beat," Kerr said. "I did a couple of things that slowed me down just a hair, but, I'll be back next year to win."

His twin brother Travis Kerr said it was obvious what slowed his brother down.

"He was trying to be neat and put the shucks in the trash can," Travis Kerr said. "Everybody else was just throwing theirs down."

"He wasted too much time," Travis Kerr said.

Trent Kerr reminded his brother that he's never been in the shucking contest before, and that he already has one title under his belt.

"Well, I'll enter that contest next year and we'll see who the fastest really is," Travis Kerr said. "It really sounds like he's daring me to enter next year and I won't disappoint him."

Meanwhile, Tori Tracy of Blairsville finished third.

The Kerr brothers challenge wasn't the only drama unfolding on Saturday.

Charles Totherow introduced his hybrid pepper named the "Paris Pepper."

For those that don't remember, Union County Sole



Lamar Paris gets an up close look at Charles Totherow's Paris Peppers. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



The defending champion Brian Mason didn't compete in 2013 giving other contestants hope that they had a chance. New Champion Harold Collins was all smiles. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Amanda Frantz, far left, and Trent Kerr, far right, are neck and neck in this photo. Frantz edged Kerr at the wire. Tori Tracy, center, finished third. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

Commissioner Lamar Paris encountered a little problem with one of Totherow's peppers last year.

Totherow considerably offered to let Paris sample what was thought to be a "mild" green pepper.

"It's not hot is it," Commissioner Paris inquired. "No, not at all," Totherow said confidently.

Commissioner Paris

took a big bite of the bright green pepper and took off in a dead run for the sweet tea stand.

A tall glass of sweet tea, a piece of homemade pie and two small tubs of Ronnie Dyer's homemade ice cream later, Commissioner Paris discovered that you had better pay attention to those little locally grown, green infernos.

It took all three Market

favorites to somewhat take the sting out of Commissioner Paris' unfortunate up close encounter with a habanero chili pepper.

"My mouth was on fire for two hours straight," Commissioner Paris said.

Of course, a smiling Totherow said Commissioner Paris chose the wrong pepper.

This year, Paris opted to not even touch one of the Paris Peppers.

"I thought better about it this year," Paris said. "Last year I was trusting, this year I'm cautious."

Totherow said the Paris Peppers aren't for sale. However, if you'd like to sample one...

"You know, we've had a lot of fun out of Lamar and those peppers, but, you know, that's what makes this place so special.

"I'd be here even if I wasn't a vendor," he said. "This is the greatest thing to ever happen here in Union County. It really is.

"The Market is a great place to bring your family and just flat out enjoy yourself," Totherow said. "Where else can you bring your wife and kids and just have a blast. It's the greatest."

Market Manager Mickey Cummings agreed.

"You know, this is the greatest thing since sliced bread," Cummings said. "It just keeps amazing me how many people are showing up here every Saturday.

"It's become a ritual for a lot of folks and they just keep coming back every Saturday," he said. "The fourth annual Sweetest Corn Festival was just as much fun as the third, probably moreso.

"This place is making its mark on Union County," he said. "People come here, they spend money and they go home happy.

"The very next week, they're back, they repeat the routine and they go home happy," he said. "You can't argue with success and the Farmers Market in Union County is one of the biggest success stories this county will ever have.

"Nobody's got a bad word to say about the Farmers Market and that's the way we want to keep it," Cummings said.

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already been accomplished, with the county putting more space between parked cars and vendors on top.

"We'll get the new work paved this week," Paris said.

The quest for more vendor and event space isn't likely to happen until next spring, Paris said.

"Once we have a place for more vehicles to park, we'll build space for more vendors," he said. "You can see today, we're out of space. We've got people on both ends. This place is slammed and it's early.

"There is so much demand for vendors and we don't have anywhere else to

put folks," Paris said. "We've got every place where you could put a vendor filled."

The Farmers Market has won over its detractors. Once called "the great pole barn," the facility has become a main attraction for Union County.

"This is the greatest pole barn anywhere," Paris said with a smile.

Union County Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings said that the number of local farmers is on the rise due to the popularity of the Market.

"Since the Market opened, we've gone from about 10 full-time farms to

44," Cummings said. "Now granted that's not a whole lot of farmers, but, it's an impressive number that will continue to grow."

Farmers are the best land use regulators for any community, Paris said.

"Instead of having to put restrictions on what you can do with property, if folks are farming, growing hay, raising cattle, and other livestock, then there's a whole chunk of property that won't be used for development," Paris said. "Farming self-zones the county. This is our way of encouraging people to grow produce and to encourage folks to buy local."

Fair opens Thursday in Hiawassee

By Joe Collins
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

Hiawassee - The 63rd Annual Georgia Mountain Fair kicks off July 18th and runs through July 27th, at the Georgia Mountain Fair Grounds.

The scheduled opening date is Friday, but the Fair's midway will actually open at 6 p.m. Thursday.

This is just one of the new features the Fair will have for visitors this year.

Expectations are running high at the Fairgrounds as the 2013 production promises to be one of the best since its opening in 1950.

The Fair has been a staple to the economy of Towns County for many years as it brings hundreds of thousands of guests to the area each summer to experience one of Georgia's premier fairs.

The tourist revenue generated by many local businesses during this time is crucial for their yearly operations, as well as increased tax revenues for local governments.

With these considerations in mind, the Fairgrounds has been working

diligently since last November to make this year's Fair a great one.

"This year's Fair will have more to offer and be more patron friendly," stated Hilda Thomason, General Manager GMF. "Ticket prices this year will include music shows and parking will be free. We raised our music budget so we have some good shows scheduled for the Anderson Music Hall including Neal McCoy, Marty Stuart, John Anderson, the Bellamy Brothers, Mel Tillis and Gene Watson.

"We've also been working diligently since November of last year to fill the arts and craft booths and this year all 68 will be full," she said. "We still need volunteers to man those booths and work with other services during the Fair. Anyone wishing to volunteer need only contact our office at (706) 896-4191."

The Fair is glad to host world-renowned tinsmith Michael Felk as one of their premier artists this season.

He will be at the Fair for three days as he demonstrates the artisan craft of 18th century tinwork with the actual tools of the day for his craft.

The big draw this year

will be the Interactive Game Experience (IGX) that features 17 video stations for kids of all ages. Patrons will be able to experience the latest game hardware such as Nintendo Wii and Wii U, Sony Play Station 3, Microsoft Xbox 360 and PS3 Move.

The IGX has games for tournament play with daily tournaments scheduled for various ages and daily bowling tournaments for the seniors. The IGX has been an integral part of the Georgia National Fair, the Kentucky State Fair and the Wisconsin State Fair and is now a proud part of the Fair in Hiawassee as well.

Folks of all ages will enjoy Pioneer Village where one can take a trip back to a time when work was done for survival and not the almighty dollar. Visit the smokehouse and see the hams curing on stop by the old home place and check out how the "old timers" cooked their food.

And don't forget the Parade on Saturday as Gov. Nathan Deal, Speaker David Ralston and 4-year-old Christian Taylor headline the 63rd Annual Parade on Main Street.