

North Georgia News

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Mia McCombs grateful to be crowned Homecoming Queen

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

The fourth time is the charm for Union County High School senior Mia McCombs.

UCHS crowned McCombs as its 2021-22 Homecoming Queen last Friday night at Mike Colwell Memorial Stadium on her fourth and final nomination to the school's Homecoming Court.

"I honestly wasn't expecting to win, so I didn't want to get my hopes up," said McCombs after accepting her crown. "But I'm just thankful, very thankful."

McCombs was crowned over a pair of her senior classmates, First Runner-Up Tori Tracy and Second Runner-Up Niya Cobb.

The junior class Runner-Up went to Chloe Potts, while Katie Byers was voted the

Sophomore Runner-Up. Freshman Runner-Up honors went to Abigail Pickelsimer.

With three previous nominations already on her resume, McCombs, determined to enjoy one final ride, took a more relaxed attitude going into her fourth selection to the court.

"I just went into it thankful that I made it all four years; I didn't expect anything else," said the UCHS cheer and track star. "I wanted to just be thankful for what I had, (and winning) turned out to be the icing on the cake."

McCombs is the daughter of Donna Collins and Howard McCombs. Following the announcement of the results, Mia McCombs, escorted by her father, accepted her crown at midfield from 2020-21 Queen Katie Baumeister.

"I want to thank my class for voting for me all four years,

and the school for allowing me to represent them as their queen," McCombs said. "I have to thank my family for always supporting me and being there for me. And my friends, I can't forget about them and all their support."

Rounding out the 2021-22 Union County Homecoming Court was senior Savannah Evans and juniors Caroline Karnes, Lexi Starling and Sophie Truex. The remaining court representatives were sophomores Linley Jones and Georgia Patton, and freshmen Ila Bragg and Mikala Souther.

Later that evening, the Panthers football team picked up its second straight victory, 36-14 over Banks County, to improve to 2-0 in Region 8-AA. For Oct. 8 game coverage, check out the Sports Section of this edition of the North Georgia News.



L-R: 2021-22 UCHS Homecoming Second Runner-Up Niya Cobb, Queen Mia McCombs and First Runner-Up Tori Tracy, all seniors. Photo by Todd Forrest

Sorghum Fest to return for second weekend Oct. 16-17



The ever-popular Biskit Eatin' Contest is held at 9:30 a.m. each day of the Sorghum Festival, with biscuits provided by Matt Leonard this year. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

By Brittany Holbrooks
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

While last year's Blairsville Sorghum Festival was canceled due to the risk of COVID-19, this year, the mountain tradition has come back stronger and sweeter than

ever and is making up for lost time.

And the family-friendly festival, sponsored by Enotah CASA and the Blairsville Sorghum Syrup Makers, will return for its second weekend on Saturday, Oct. 16, and Sunday, Oct. 17. Sprawling through Meeks

Park, the rows of pitched white tents look nearly like a tiny metropolis, populated by a more diverse group of vendors and guests than ever before.

Blue Ridge resident Katie Turner, attending with her friend Sara Carroll, mentioned that a lot had changed this year. See Sorghum Festival, Page 8A

Four men enter prestigious local 'Ag Hall of Fame'



Mickey Cummings, right, presented Lee Knight and W.C. Nelson with special shirts last week to commemorate their induction into the Union County Agriculture Hall of Fame. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

By Shawn Jarrard
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Four men joined the distinguished ranks of the Union County Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2021: W.C. Nelson, Lee Knight, Cecil Nelson and Bill Meeks.

Cecil Nelson and Bill Meeks received their honors posthumously, as Nelson passed away in 1998 and Meeks in

1994.

The role of the Ag Hall of Fame is to highlight the hard work and dedication of inductees, all of whom have indelibly influenced the agricultural heritage of the county with their contributions.

Traditionally, Ag Hall of Fame Induction Ceremonies occur each Labor Day Weekend, with inductees and their family and friends gathering for a

celebration at the Union County Farmers Market.

Due to concern over COVID-19, however, there was no formal induction ceremony in either 2020 or 2021, though Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings announced this year's inductees over the loudspeaker for market guests on Sept. 4.

The Hall of Fame is a mutual endeavor by the See Ag Hall of Fame, Page 3A

State unable to determine cause of fatal home explosion

By Shawn Jarrard
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The Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner's Office said last week that state investigators have been unable to determine the cause of the May 2 fatal home explosion at

307 Pauline Lane that resulted in the deaths of homeowners Norris and Peggy Wood.

"Unfortunately, it looks like this fire is going to be officially ruled as undetermined, due to the extent of the damages," said Weston Bursleson, Director

of Communications and Legislative Affairs for the Office of Commissioner John F. King.

"We cannot rule out a gas explosion, whether that's from methane, propane, etc.," Bursleson continued. "It'll be

See Fatal Explosion, Page 2A



Tragically, the Wood Family home at 307 Pauline Lane exploded in a May 2 fatal blast that investigators have been unable to solve. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

TSPLOST early voting began Tuesday, to run thru Oct. 29

By Shawn Jarrard
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Advanced in-person voting for the countywide Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax referendum began Tuesday, Oct. 12, and will continue weekdays through

Oct. 29 in the Jury Assembly Room of the Union County Courthouse, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

This is an off year for countywide elections, so the only item on the ballot for this Special Election called by Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris is the Transportation Special Purpose Local Option Sales

Tax, or TSPLOST.

As previously reported, TSPLOST is a proposed additional 1-cent sales tax that, if passed, would result in Union County sales taxes increasing from 7 cents to 8 cents on the dollar effective April 1, 2022.

The tax is projected to generate between \$5 million See Early Voting, Page 2A

City Council accepts millage rate, talks property issue

By Mark Smith
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

At their monthly meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 5, Blairsville City Council members voted unanimously to accept the rollback millage rate of 1.377 mills – a 27% decrease from the 2020 rate of 1.895 mills.

The 2021 millage rate is a direct result of substantial growth in the city digest, with real and personal property values having shot up 36.5% between 2020 and 2021 following the completion of the recent countywide reassessment that captured both inflationary and new growth.

Inflationary growth is what triggered such a significant rollback, as the city must advertise a tax increase if



Blairsville City Council Members Tony Dyer and Mary Ruth Cook in the Oct. 5 regular city meeting. Photo by Mark Smith

it plans to collect more revenue than it did the previous year due to simple inflationary increases to existing property values.

As such, the new lowered millage rate will result in about

the same revenues as last year, projected to bring in just \$976 less in total property tax collections over 2020 for a total levy of \$121,453 for 2021.

See City Council, Page 2A

Vol. 112 No. 42
4 Sections 28 Pages
Weather
Thurs: Cloudy Hi 81 Lo 58
Fri: Sunny Hi 79 Lo 61
Sat: Showers Hi 69 Lo 45

Inside
Arrests 5B
Church 2C
Classifieds 3D
Opinion 4A
Legals 5D
Obits 4C
Sports 2B

SPORTS
FOOTBALL
10/15 @ Elbert Co. 7:30 PM
SOFTBALL
STATE 1ST ROUND TOURNEY
OCT. 14 & 15
@ Pace Academy - Best of Three

Document Destruction/ Electronic Recycling
Oct. 23
See page 6A

EAA Chili Fly-In
Oct. 16
See page 4B

Angela Morris Family Fundraiser
Oct. 16
See page 5C

Early Voting...from Page 1A

and \$7 million per year over five years, with collections to go toward local roads and bridgework, including safety improvements around the county and maintenance for the more than 600 miles of county roads.

Per the Department of Revenue, sales tax in Georgia is imposed on the retail sales price of tangible personal property and certain services, like the sale of accommodations, in-state transportation of individuals (e.g., taxis, limos), sales of admissions, and charges for participation in games and amusement activities.

New this year is the addition of a second day of weekend early voting, giving people too busy to vote during the week chances to cast ballots early in person on Saturday, Oct. 16, and Saturday, Oct. 23, also from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and even during lunchtime.

Election Day voting will take place Nov. 2 from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at the 11 pre-assigned precincts of Union County.

Voters may pick up a copy of the new "Application for Georgia Official Absentee Ballot" from the Union County Registrar's Office located at 65 Courthouse Street in Blairsville or print a copy at https://sos.ga.gov/admin/uploads/2021_Absentee_App.9721_2.pdf.

"Georgia law allows for absentee-by-mail ballots to be requested no earlier than 78 days and no later than 11 days prior to an election," per sos.ga.gov. "Absentee ballot applications can be returned by mail, fax, email (as an attachment), or in-person to the local County Board of Registrar's Office."

People are encouraged to request and return their

absentee ballots early to give their ballot "enough time to travel through the mail and resolve any issues that may arise when voting by absentee ballot," per [georgia.gov](https://sos.ga.gov).

For the November election, the deadline to return absentee-by-mail ballot applications is Oct. 22. Folks wanting to utilize the official drop box to turn in their absentee ballots can find it in the Jury Assembly Room during early voting hours.

Voters can also drop completed absentee ballots off at the Registrar's Office through Election Day.

Currently, there is a mask mandate in effect for courthouses of the Enotah Judicial Circuit, so all early voters will be required to wear a mask unless the judicial order requiring them is lifted or expires during the three weeks of advanced in-person voting.

BLAIRSVILLE SPECIAL ELECTION

Early voting in the nonpartisan Blairsville Special Election to fill the unexpired term of Councilwoman Betty Easter also began Oct. 12 and will continue each weekday through Oct. 29, and on Oct. 16 and Oct. 23, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day at Blairsville City Hall.

Blairsville Elections Superintendent Kaye McCann asks that registered city voters wishing to request an absentee-by-mail ballot contact her at 706-745-2000. The last day to request an absentee ballot by mail in the city's Special Election is Oct. 22.

City of Blairsville Election Day voting will take place for city residents on Nov. 2 inside City Hall from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. at 62 Blue Ridge Street.

Fatal Explosion...from Page 1A

a little while longer before we have a final written report ready to be released, given the technical nature of the investigation."

According to Bursleson, "undetermined" essentially means that there is not enough definitive information to make a call of complete certainty as to the cause, and additional information will not be available until the final report is released.

"However, we can say that there is absolutely no evidence of foul play at this point," he added.

The Insurance and Safety Fire Commissioner's Office, aka the State Fire Marshal's Office, investigated the case in concert with the Union County Fire Department, Union County Sheriff's Office and Union County Coroner's Office.

Additionally, private sector engineers, experts and investigators worked the scene on behalf of the insurance

companies with interest in the explosion.

"This unprecedented blast left several homes in the area damaged," Commissioner King said at the time, forecasting in May that the investigation could take "up to several weeks before the cause is determined."

However, the investigation has been ongoing for more than five months and has taken this long "due to the extent of the damage," which saw the 1,594-square-foot structure essentially reduced to its foundation.

The explosion occurred around 8 a.m. on Sunday, May 2, resulting in a roughly 200-foot debris field concentrated around the blast that left only three of the home's basement walls still standing.

People reported being able to hear the blast all the way from Cherokee County, North Carolina, and TV news crews drove up from Atlanta to report

on the explosion, which was violent enough to send debris from the non-lakefront home flying into Lake Nottely.

According to state and local officials, the Pauline Lane blast was one of the biggest home explosions in recent memory, both here in Union County and around the state.

Two other homes have exploded in the last year, including the fatal camper propane accident at River's Edge RV Park off Old Bald Mountain Road from Sept. 22, 2020, and the thankfully nonfatal home propane accident off Trackrock Gap Road from Sept. 12, 2021.

Union County Fire Chief David Dyer urges homeowners with propane to be extremely careful in using the flammable gas, making sure to contact professionals if they have any concerns or work needing to be done on their propane appliances.

City Council...from Page 1A

The council also heard the first reading of Ordinance No. 2021-03 to adopt the 2022 Operating Budget, to which there were no objections.

In other business, the council and Mayor Jim Conley discussed the condition of the property on Georgia 515 near the Murphy Highway intersection that once housed the Greystone Building, which suffered major structural damage in an accidental fire on Sept. 28, 2020.

The building has since been torn down, but the lot features rubble from the demolition and an old truck engine sitting out in the parking lot.

"Could anyone disagree with me that, first of all and most importantly, it's a dangerous hazard for somebody just walking through there?" Councilman Tony Dyer said. "Also, it looks like to me it could possibly be a health issue, and, most obvious, an eyesore, so I think the city is probably obligated to try to do something about it."

Conley agreed with Dyer, as did all other council members.

Blairsville City Attorney David Barrett pointed to a city nuisance ordinance from 2005 that can be enforced as well as the general state nuisance law that defines what the city can and cannot do.

Barrett said the city can seek an injunction either locally through the magistrate or through the Superior Court of the State of Georgia.

Conley attempted to steer the issue toward an amicable solution, saying the city would reach out to the owner about the situation via a mailed letter.

However, the owner of the property, Frank Pack, stood up and said there was no need to mail him anything, as he was present in the Oct. 5 meeting.

In a somewhat contentious exchange, Pack told the council and mayor he had been unable to find help to finish cleaning up the property, and he insisted that there was no debris on the site.

No solution was reached between Pack and the council by the end of the discussion that evening, and it appeared that the city would be considering a legal resolution if the property continued to remain in its present condition.

Pack is one of three candidates running for the open council seat in the upcoming Blairsville Special Election on Nov. 2.

Also in the meeting, the council approved moving forward with an application for the State Fiscal Recovery Grant to pursue extending sewer service east along Georgia 515 from approximately Rib Country Restaurant to the area of Galaxy Bowling and Blairsville Cinema.

city sewer service and not water service.

Utilizing the option will require an outside water company to be responsible for collecting both water and sewer bills before turning the sewer portion over to the city, thereby protecting the city from billing delinquencies.

Conley said this aspect of the sewer-only option would have to be a contractual agreement between the city and other water companies, and additional updates in this process will be forthcoming in future meetings.

Moving along, the council authorized the mayor and City Clerk Kaye McCann to execute a state grant application for Public Safety Officials bonus.

"Gov. (Brian) Kemp announced last month that, as part of the state's (American Rescue Plan Act) federal funds, he is giving every public safety official and first responder a \$1,000 pay supplement," McCann said.

"It's going to all eligible sworn law enforcement officials and first responders in Georgia," she continued, adding that the city must apply for it "just like we did with the ARPA money and the COVID grant money."

McCann clarified that this money would come from the state ARPA funds and not from the city's portion.

During the Public Comments portion of the meeting, Mountain Regional Library System Director Heath Lee addressed council members to thank them and the City of Blairsville for their support.

Following Lee, Cindy Vandereed expressed her opinions on the three candidates running to fill the remaining term of Councilwoman Betty Easter, who passed away on Aug. 31.

Blairsville City Council and Mayor Conley will meet again on Tuesday, Nov. 9. They normally meet the first Tuesday of each month, but the November meeting has been moved back a week to accommodate the Nov. 2 city election.

Ag HOF ...from Page 1A

Farmers Market, which hosts the inductions, and the Union County Historical Society, whose board judges the applications, with duplicate Hall of Fame plaques hanging at the Farmers Market and inside the Old Courthouse Museum.

“We just want to make sure that the Farmers Market always has a tie back to the community,” Cummings said. “The reason behind the Hall of Fame is to honor farmers and those involved in agriculture in the past so that people will never forget. Without our predecessors, there wouldn’t be a Farmers Market.”

W.C. NELSON

Concerning this year’s inductees, W. C. Nelson was honored alongside his father, Cecil, with whom he began working at Nelson Tractor Co. in 1964, eventually buying him out in 1982.

During the ‘80s, the economic impact of agriculture in the area served by Nelson Tractor had grown to hundreds of millions of dollars, and W.C. was able to successfully grow his family business that now serves customers in 10 Northeast Georgia counties and five in Western North Carolina.

For years, W. C. Nelson has been a donor to the Union County 4-H Club, Union County Future Farmers of America, and Youth Recreation Leagues of Union County.

He has also served as a donor and host to many Blue Ridge Mountain Cattlemen’s Association events and has partnered with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service to conduct numerous educational events regarding hay production and tractor safety.

W.C. learned the importance of customer service from his father, and that legacy continues to this day at Nelson Tractor Company, which is now being led by a third-generation Nelson in W.C.’s son Will Nelson.

For his part, W.C. said he was incredibly honored to be included with his fellow Union Countians in the local Agriculture Hall of Fame.

LEE KNIGHT

Originally from the Palmetto State, Lee Knight moved from Summerville, South Carolina, to Union County, Georgia, about 38 years ago to get away from the urbanization of the area around Charleston.

Here, he continued his farming career, focusing on producing vegetables,

livestock, sweet sorghum and Burley tobacco, all the while working to promote farming best practices for his peers in the agriculture industry.

Knight is renowned for his sweet corn varieties, which he has sold at the Farmers Market dating back to when it was held in the Union County Courthouse parking lot, and he has sweet corn customers in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Alabama.

He serves on the Union County Farm Bureau Board of Directors and the Union County Farmers Market Advisory Council and has worked extensively over the years with the UGA Cooperative Extension to conduct on-farm demonstrations and develop insect control and fertility programs.

Due to his many years of experience and ties in the community, Knight is considered an early innovator and leader among his peers in Union County and Northeast Georgia.

“Anything that represents any kind of achievement in agriculture means a lot to me, being a farmer,” Knight said. “I consider (this induction) to be an honor.”

CECIL NELSON

Cecil Nelson worked as a mechanic in the 1940s, at which point he partnered with Ralph Twigg, who was the local Ford dealer. At that time, a dealer could sell both cars and tractors, and the business grew rapidly with Nelson’s assistance.

In 1949, Cecil purchased the tractor business from Twigg to begin Nelson Tractor Co., which through the years would sell Ford, Kubota and John Deere tractors.

The Nelson Family lived next door to Nelson Tractor in Blairsville, and people would stop in at all times of the day and night to get parts.

A favorite story of the family is the time Cecil was in the shower and a man dropped by to talk to him about an issue he was having with his tractor. Cecil correctly diagnosed the problem and told the man what to do to fix his tractor – all while still in the shower.

For years the Nelson family has relied upon this story to direct their efforts in the tractor business, thriving for now three generations in part because of the company’s emphasis on service to the customer.

Under Cecil’s leadership, the tractor dealership sold tractors to farmers in seven Northeast Georgia counties and

four in Western North Carolina, making a combined economic impact of millions of dollars in all these counties.

It is for these reasons that Cecil Nelson was posthumously honored as a member of the Union County Agriculture Hall of Fame for his tremendous impact upon the economic wellbeing of farmers within the counties he served.

BILL MEEKS

Last but not least is Bill Meeks, on whose land Meeks Park would eventually be designated for the entire community to enjoy. Over his lifetime, Meeks served on various boards, including as a Board Supervisor for the Blue Ridge Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District.

He also helped obtain grant funding to organize and build a stockyard/sale barn in Ranger, North Carolina, that provided a place to market cattle locally instead of transporting them across the mountain, thereby saving beef producers a tremendous amount of money in transportation costs.

Further, he worked with UGA Cooperative Extension Staff to conduct research and demonstration experiments on his farm, and he was a mover and shaker in the area and always supported 4-H and FFA youth events.

Meeks was an organizer of the very first chapter of the Blueridge Cattlemen’s Association in Union County and served as a member of the State Legislature for two terms.

A meticulous record keeper, Meeks was the first producer in Union County to own and use livestock scales to determine cattle weights; routinely vaccinate cattle and use recommended herd health practices on his farm; and build cross fences and utilize rotational grazing.

Meeks also developed a weed control program using both mechanical and chemical methods, and he was an early innovator in implementing a nutrient management program on his pastures, ensuring the prevention of overexposure of excessive nutrients to Lake Nottely.

As such, his reputation as an outstanding beef farmer and early innovator of conservation practices continues to this day.

FARMING LEGACY

And while the agriculture industry in Union County isn’t what it once was due in part to growth and land prices largely outpacing the ability to maintain a farm business here, agriculture retains a significant economic impact in the area and remains an important part

Hydroponics and Higher Education



Rotary: People of Action

On Thursday October 7, the Rotary Club of Union County got a visit from Gene Boyd of the neighboring Rotary Club of Lake Chatuge. He gave the UCRC insight into their signature project: The Rick and Jan DuBois Community Garden - a hydroponic farm!

Since April their club has been methodically creating an indoor tower garden in a portable barn-style building. They are producing 60 to 80 heads of lovely leafy greens weekly for food banks in

Towns County, GA and Clay County, NC. The club is planning expansion into other veggies as well. The UCRC was pleased to make a donation to their sister club’s project.

Back in September, the club enjoyed a visit from the new director of career and professional development at Young Harris College. Club member, Jamie Levins introduced John Beck who gave an interesting talk about getting students ready to go out into the workforce or proceed to

the next phase of education. Everything from professional dressing to a good handshake and following-through with internships is important. He encouraged local businesspeople to hire YHC students and recent YHC graduates.

Have you considered joining Rotary? This exciting organization provides local networking, fellowship, and vital services on a local, national, and world-wide level. Recently the club has been meeting in creative spaces over concern for the rising incidence of the Delta variant.

The next Rotary meeting is Thursday, October 21st. To learn more contact club president, Daniel Duello at (706) 603-3036 or email him at daniel@duellolaw.com.

Karen Beaty receives Love of Learning Award

Karen Beaty of Blairsville, GA, was recently awarded a Love of Learning Award worth \$500 from The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation’s oldest and most selective collegiate honor society for all academic disciplines. Beaty is one of 200 recipients to receive the award.

Love of Learning Awards are designed to help fund post-baccalaureate professional development for active Phi Kappa Phi members including graduate or professional studies, doctoral dissertations, continuing education, travel related to teaching and research, career development and more.

Beaty, a graduate student at Arkansas State University, will use funds from the award to complete her Master of Public Administration and to pursue additional studies in grant writing.

Beaty was initiated into Phi Kappa Phi in 2021 at Arkansas State University.



Pictured left to right are: Union County Rotary Club President, Daniel Duello with Jamie Levins and John Beck. N|Oct13.Z16|CA



Gene Boyd accepts a donation from UCRC past president, Ed Sternberg for the Lake Chatuge Rotary Club’s Hydroponic Farm. N|Oct13.Z10|CA

Sorghum Festival...from Page 1A



It takes a lot of hands minding the sorghum syrup pan down at the mill in Meeks.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

and that folks needed to “get their butts out here! It’s good local fun ... Do some shopping. Support local, shop local.”

Carroll noted that organizers had “moved the biscuit eating to first thing in the morning instead of the afternoon,” and Turner added there was “a good variety of vendors to shop from,” before voicing her appreciation for the music and games offered all day on the festival grounds.

The two were in good company. As crowded as ever, tourists and locals alike strolled through the festival to live blues, country, and classic rock music through the backdrop of the gorgeous autumn forest and historical Grist Mill on the Blue Ridge Highway side of the park.

There was no petting zoo in 2021, but animals were represented by newcomer vendor Wonderland Animal Sanctuary of Hayesville, North Carolina, which offered crafts, antique jewelry, and even small wall decorations to raise funds for over 70 rescued pets and livestock.

“Last year, our two-story barn was hit by lightning and burned to the ground. It did not have animals in it; it had everything we needed for our property,” explained owner Robbin Sinay, sporting a hot pink pair of Cheshire cat ears to fit with the themed name displayed on her tent.

Jeff Woodward drove from Towns County with son River to experience the Sorghum Festival. Sitting on a suitably fall-decorated bridge that spanned the scenic creek running through the park, Woodward expressed his interest in the festival for its location.

“The minute you get above Atlanta and you see the mountains, everybody says they roll their window down and they just want to take it in,” Woodward said.

Eventually, he plans to set up his own vending table at the Sorghum Festival after



Jeff and River Woodward of Towns County were two of thousands who enjoyed their time at the 2021 Sorghum Festival, which will return this weekend.

Photo by Brittany Holbrooks

he gathers funding for his moonshine museum.

“I love the old way of life ... History speaks to me, so I’m in love with it all,” he said.

Stretching before the bridge in the vast field beyond were not only the majority of the vendors, but also rest stop benches, bleachers, specialty food vendors, and even games and small rides for children.

Here was where one of the major changes to the festival really shined. Opening up avenues for greater cultural diversity, Red Hills Catering visited for the first weekend of the festival, traveling from as far away as Gwinnett.

At their booth, they offered authentic Jamaican cuisine like jerk chicken and pork, and their refreshing tropical lemonade was a hit among festivalgoers.

But just because there were noteworthy changes didn’t mean the festival hadn’t stuck to its Appalachian roots. Woodcarving, homemade jewelry and soaps, pottery, and all manner of food including fruit and vegetable jams, salsas, honey, funnel cakes, and of course sorghum syrup were on display.

Jean Cook, owner of J&H Craft and Soap Creations, got her sister Gloria of Southern

Girl Crafts, located in the next tent over, interested in peddling at local festivals.

“We really like it here,” Cook said, sitting behind a beautifully organized display of various jellies and colorful, fragrant soap bars. “We really do like it. We have better sales here than anywhere else.”

She attributed the area’s beauty and the festival’s placement to her increased vending, adding that “people around here are really nice.”

Be sure to check out the second weekend of the 52nd Annual Sorghum Festival, which will feature a mix of returning and new vendors to Meeks Park Oct. 16-17 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The festival will kick off at 9 a.m. with the making of the festival namesake sweet sorghum syrup at the pan in Meeks Park, with a biscuit eating contest at 9:30 a.m. and additional games from 12:30-1:30 p.m., including Log Sawin’, Rock Throwin’ and a Children’s Sack Race.

Music and other live performances will take place all weekend long, and parking for the festival is free, with admission for everyone 13 and up being just \$5. Children 12 and under get in free.



Thousands of visitors flocked to the 52nd Annual Sorghum Festival during its opening weekend in Meeks Park.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson