

Indian Summer ...from Page 1A



Students with the Local Studies Market selling fried apple pies and boiled p-nuts during a past Indian Summer Festival. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

of it, the Woody Gap Sports Club became an incorporated entity, and they took it over," Knight said. "The Indian Summer Festival happens for the school and for its students, but it's not the school actually doing it.

"The school participates and provides the venue, but these folks who are the leadership of the Sports Club are the people who make this happen. The success of the Indian Summer Festival has enabled the Sports Club to branch out and do more than just support the athletic programs."

Knight said the Sports Club's expanded purview includes support for academic excellence, scholarships, field trips, and school supplies that benefit and meet the needs of students in Suches.

"Suches is the name of a Cherokee chief, and our elementary students every year put on the 'Cherokee Drama,'" said Knight.

For the drama, students don handmade costumes and intertwine Cherokee sign language and lore, which Knight said was a great way to teach the students their local history and, for some, their heritage, which should never be forgotten.

Woody Gap Sports Club, Inc. President Larry Wood said that there is heritage and local history behind the naming of the festival, as well.

According to Wood, long before the first settlers arrived, Indian Summer was when the Cherokee Indians of the North Georgia Mountains harvested their summer crops.

As usual, the festival will feature a great number of crafts, T-shirts and caps, an assortment of sweets like funnel cake, as well as haircuts, a Country Square Dance at 8 p.m. in the Suches Community Center, plus plenty of live music, including the renowned Woody Gap Band of Steel.

"The entertainment schedule is a big draw," Knight said. "The coaches will put on an auction that people very much enjoy, and Larry is the auctioneer. Of course, another big draw is Larry's brother, Jerry, does the barbecue. And the teachers have a booth with hamburgers and hot dogs."

Then there are the famous pies made by the Gaddistown Homemakers Club, whose members will have a variety of homemade pies available for sale that will be made fresh in the Woody Gap School kitchen – pumpkin, pecan, apple and brownie pies, to name a few.

"We just love to fix them up," said Gaddistown Homemakers Club President Dena Gooch, adding that a lot of people buy them and freeze them for the upcoming Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

Wood said there are still a few vendor spots open and volunteers needed as well, so anyone interested should contact him at 706-973-0289. The vendor fees are very reasonable, and all surplus money goes to benefit the students of Woody Gap School.

The family-friendly festival will run from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days this weekend,

and it will kick off with the 21st consecutive "Run Above the Clouds" 5K and 10K fundraiser races, set to begin at 8:30 a.m. on Oct. 5 in Suches.

The Run Above the Clouds 10K race is Georgia's highest 10K road race at 2,792 feet above sea level. There are higher trail races, but no higher road races in Georgia.

Woody Gap School is Georgia's smallest and only K-12 public school, and the Run Above the Clouds event is put on solely to provide need-based scholarships for Woody Gap students.

Race sponsors include local businesses and individuals, and 100% of sponsor money goes toward scholarships for Woody Gap seniors and graduates to help further their college careers.

Runners receive awards for first and second place finishes in eight age categories, both male and female, for both the 5K and 10K races. The awards are handmade by local crafters, and acceptance of these awards is a hallmark of the event.

Online registration for the races will be available until midnight on Thursday, Oct. 3. Onsite registration will begin on Friday, Oct. 4, from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., and on the day of the race, Saturday, Oct. 5, from 7-8 a.m.

Just over 70 runners registered three years ago. Then, there were 113 runners in 2017. Last year, 180 people ran. And by press time, over 100 folks had registered for the 2019 Run Above the Clouds, with many more expected.

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