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Azalea fest ready to bloom in Pickens

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Spring festival season is in full gear as residents and visitors alike prepare to flock to downtown Pickens for helicopter rides, live music, classic cars, crafts and more at the 26th Azalea Festival.

"It's a hometown event," said Russ Gantt, coordinator of the Azalea Festival. "I think it's a way for the community to come out and enjoy the day, to come together."

The Azalea Festival is slated for Friday and Saturday in downtown Pickens.

"It's our biggest and best time to market the city," Pickens City Administrator Katherine Brackett said, describing how 20,000 or more people come to Pickens for the festival. "It's great for businesses."

Brackett said the city has worked on beautification projects, including a clean-up day, to get ready for the festival this year.

"We've been painting in some areas and doing some landscaping on our new property (near the Bradley-Boggs House) to get ready," she said. "We're going to kind of showcase that, too, by building a temporary stage on our new property for bands on the west end of Main Street."

Gantt said new additions this year include a military exhibit with restored vehicles and weapons that will be on display throughout the day Saturday as well as Dale Earnhardt Sr.'s No. 3 car and a NASCAR simulator from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday.

On Friday, a classic car cruise in will start at 7 p.m. Last year the cruise in had about 200 vehicles of all types, Gantt said.

Also Friday night, fun-seekers will find amusement rides and entertainment, including The Extraordinaires as the headline entertainment on the main stage.

Activities start Saturday around 8:30 a.m. with a 5K walk/run, sponsored by the Pickens Women's Association, at Pickens High School. There is a fee for the 5K.

Gantt said the festival kicks off again at 10 a.m. Saturday and goes until 9 p.m.

WANT TO GO?

For more information go to www.pickensazaleafestival.org.