Big bash for 'Rocky'

Community turns out in force for vet battling cancer, medical costs

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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GAP HILL — For more than 19 years, families have made the Lake Keowee shores of Gap Hill Marina their recreational getaway of choice. Here they bring their blankets and beach chairs, enjoy a picnic, soak up the sun and cool off in the lake.

Although privately owned, the welcome mat is always out, no questions asked.

Rocky Wells took over ownership of the property in January 1992 with one condition from the previous owner.

"You're running this like I've been running it?" the previous owner asked Wells. "I said, 'Yes sir, sure will,' and that's how I got it. I've been continuing what he started. We kept it the same."

It's been an open-space, carefree tradition that people have come to appreciate.

So, when news spread throughout the community that a benefit concert was being held for Wells, who is battling cancer, and recently returned from Charleston after undergoing intensive jaw reconstruction surgery, people turned out in full force Sunday for the event.

StoneEcho, fresh from their gig at Seneca Fest, volunteered their talents for the event. The band rocked tune after tune from the covered stage overlooking Lake Keowee, as a crowd surrounding the stage cheered and moved to the pulsating rhythms. Boats large and small dotted the lake for the free concert and to donate to the cause.


Wells

A U.S. Marine Corps veteran who saw artillery action in Vietnam in 1969, Wells is as tough as they come.

But when asked what the Memorial Day weekend benefit tribute meant to him, he fought back tears and his voice faltered.

"You can't put it into words," Wells said, as daughter Silver Clay patted his arm. "You can't explain this to anybody, if you don't go through it yourself. It's amazing, that's all I can say."

Donald Payne, one of about a dozen friends that organized the benefit bash, said everything fell in place for the event to appropriately be held over the Memorial Day weekend.

Wells' father fought in World War II as a Marine and his son, Josh Wells, is a Marine Corps captain serving in Afghanistan.

"There's three generations in his family and it just means a whole lot to hold this now," Payne said. "He's been real good to the community and the people here on Lake Keowee. He's been a real great asset to Oconee and Pickens counties."

Contributions to the Rocky Wells Cancer Treatment Fund can be made at any BB&T branch, c/o Deanna W. Bolding, Financial Center leader. For more information call (864) 653-7092.


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Donald Payne, center, MCs a benefit concert at the Gap Hill Marina on Lake Keowee in Pickens County on Sunday for the marina's owner, Rocky Wells, who is battling cancer. Playing in the background is the local rock group, StoneEcho.

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