Celebrations burst forth this weekend

Fireworks, family oriented events planned for Anderson, Pickens

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EASLEY — Area residents will have several entertainment options in the days ahead as they celebrate the country's independence.

In downtown Pickens, the 12th annual Pickens Celebrates the Fourth event is expected to bring out thousands of residents and visitors looking to commemorate the day.

The event will be from 2 p.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday on Main Street and will include amusement rides, live music, fireworks, and concessions and vendors selling food, said Jenny Owens, financial secretary at East Pickens Baptist Church, which sponsors the event with the city of Pickens.

"We wanted something for the whole family to do," Owens said. " It's for all ages."

She said the event also gives people an affordable entertainment option.

"We have it to let the community know how much we appreciate them here at East Pickens and that we love them," Owens said.

She said admission is free, but amusement rides require a $5 ticket to ride all day.

Fireworks will start at about 10 p.m.

Owens said they have had about 10,000 people come to the event for the last few years and expect even more this year be-

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RICHARD SHIRO

The fireworks get off to an early start Friday when Greenville-Pickens Speedway holds its annual display following a night of racing.

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cause events around the area are on different days throughout the weekend.

Saturday, Clemsonfest returns to the old Y Beach on Lake Hartwell.

Lindsey Newton, tourism director for the Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce, said gates open at 5:30 p.m.

Cost is $10 per car and $5 on foot.

Clemsonfest will have live music by The Catalinas, activities for children including free inflatables, craft vendors, and food vendors selling funnel cakes, Italian ice and burgers.

Fireworks will start when it gets dark enough, Newton said, which should be around 9:15 p.m. Saturday.

"We don't allow any personal coolers or pets, but we do encourage you to bring blankets and chairs and hang out and listen to the music," she said.

Ruthie Millar, membership director for the Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce, said this is a family-oriented event for people to celebrate the Fourth.

"We enjoy giving back to the community and investing in the community that we live, work and play in because we appreciate that the community invests in us throughout the year," she said. "This is our way of giving back to the people that support us."

In downtown Easley, festival-goers will find Celebrate America, an event put on by the city that boasts live entertainment, carnival rides, fireworks, food and craft vendors, and more.

This year the event has been expanded to three days — Friday, Saturday and Sunday, said Scott Buckhiester, vice president of operations for DunBurks Premier Events, which manages the city's events.

He said last year, and for the past several years, the event has been one day.

"For this event, people come from all over," Buckhiester said. "We will have visitors coming from not only the whole Upstate of South Carolina but the surrounding states and counties."

He said the festival has been held for more than 30 years and said an estimated 10,000 people came last year.

"We expect more than that (this year)," he said. "Last year was a single-day event. Over the three days we could more than double that."

Friday, festivities will start at 5 p.m. and go until 10 p.m. in Old Market Square downtown, with activities including a classic car cruise-in and 50's music playing from the main stage.

For Saturday and Sunday, Pendleton Street will be closed, and the festivities will take place there, as well as in Old Market Square.

Food vendors will be set up all three days, while craft vendors will be set up Saturday and Sunday, and carnival rides will operate on Friday and Saturday.

"We have over 50 vendors already for Saturday and Sunday," Buckhiester said.

The event is open from noon until 10 p.m. Saturday and from 2 to 10 p.m. Sunday, with entertainment throughout the day on the main stage.

The Flashbacks will perform Saturday and the Big Time band on Sunday.

Fireworks will start at 9:45 p.m. Sunday, Buckhiester said.

He said admission is free all three days but said there is a cost to ride amusement rides and to purchase food and crafts.

"It's just a big family reunion a lot of times ... It is to premier southern hospitality in Easley," Buckhiester said.

Freedom Fest in Pendleton is set for Saturday at Veterans Park, according to a release.

Gates will open at 6 p.m. and the festival will begin at 6:30 p.m.

It will include live music and other entertainment, concessions, children's games, and a hero's tent as a tribute to servicemen and women, veterans, firefighters and police, the release said.

Fireworks will start around 9:45 p.m.

The event is a fundraiser for the Step up to the Platecampaign to renovate the ball fields and erect a veteran's memorial at the park, according to the release.