Central Railroad festival returns

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CENTRAL — The Central Railroad Festival is back.

Using the opening of a new downtown museum as a catalyst, the Central Area Business Council and the Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce have revived a festival that enjoyed a 10-year run in Central in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The new Central Railroad Festival will be held May 15-16 in downtown Central.

A highlight of the weekend will be the dedication and grand opening of the Central Railway Museum at 1 p.m. May 16.

"The Railway Museum was really the catalyst that helped bring all of this together," said Bobby Ballentine, owner of Heirlooms and Comforts in Central and chairman of the festival committee.

Central was born as a railroad town, serving as the connecting rail link between Charlotte and Atlanta in the late 1800s. The railroad company eventually moved out of Central and textiles moved in, but now residents want to re-establish that railroad history and help give them — and their town — a sense of place.

"It's a good opportunity for the community to come together," said Janelle Montgomery, who oversees publicity for the festival.

WANT TO GO?
What: Central Railroad Festival
When: May 15 and 16
Where: Downtown Central
More info: www.centralrrfestival.com

In addition to the opening of the museum, the festival will feature arts and crafts, food vendors and live music.

The festival committee has announced that Christopher Branch, Austin Webb, New Dixie Storm and Toni Tidwell will perform Friday, followed Saturday by Curtis Blackwell and the Dixie Bluegrass Boys, Wild Hog Band and Lonesome Road Band.

Children's events include model train displays, a storyteller, balloon artist, face painting, a kids' drawing contest, tours of the town's caboose, a puppet show, tractor train rides and Thomas the Tank Engine attractions.

Bobby Rettew of View Digital Media in Central said his company is putting together several videos on Central that will be available to its online partners in Anderson and Greenville and social networking sites such as myspace.com and facebook.com in the weeks and days leading up to the festival.

"We want to see if we can bring a different audience to the festival," Rettew said.

Rettew also said his company plans to shoot video the weekend of the festival and post it online during the event.