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Event promises to liven up lonely land

BY CARLOS GALARZA
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FAIR PLAY — The Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair is getting ready to fill with fun and laughter some 400 acres of Oconee County owned property officials hope to turn into an industrial park some day.

County officials invested $2.3 million in 2005 in the Fair Play property close to Interstate 85 with the dream of advancing economic development.

Five years later, it is being used for the very first time to host the second annual Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair that opens Wednesday and runs through Nov. 7.

On Friday, Heritage Fair board members were sizing up the sprawling grounds of the county's property in advance of a busy weekend of preparation for the big event.

Board members are grateful to the Oconee County Council, which voted earlier this year to allow the group to bring the fair onto the vacant tract.

Oconee County also put in a gravel road that connects the fairgrounds with the entrance

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IF YOU GO

What: Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair
Where: Golden Corner Commerce Park and Fairgrounds, 1220 Highway 59, Fair Play, SC 29643
When: 4-10 p.m. Wednesday; 3-10 p.m. Thursday; 3 p.m.-midnight Friday; 10 a.m.-midnight Nov. 6; 1-5 p.m. Nov. 7; Cowboy Church 10 a.m. Nov. 7
Admission: Adults, $3; children and students, $2
Information: Visit www.carolinafoothillsheritagefair.org for event and entertainment schedule.

Rick McAvoy, a Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair board member, points Friday to fair's location in Fair Play.

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EVENT: Starts Wednesday

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on Highway 59.

To top it off, council voted to approve an Accommodations Tax (ATAX) grant in the amount of $12,500 to the Heritage Fair. The money has been used to promote the event.

The Heritage Fair features live entertainment, music, food, arts and crafts, livestock and agricultural exhibits that promoters hope will attract not just local residents, but visitors from Georgia, North Carolina and other areas of South Carolina.

Rick McAvoy, one of the board members at the fairgrounds Friday, said plenty of sweat equity by volunteers has been put in to preparing the layout for the event.

McAvoy pointed to a clearing where a hedgerow used to be. He said tents would go up in the area for dozens of vendors and exhibitors.

"We did a lot of trimming," McAvoy said.

Another board member, Charlie Whiten of Whiten Farms, said fairgrounds would open early Thursday to elementary school students for Heritage Farm Days at the Fair. He said some 900 students would be bused in to the fairgrounds where they will enjoy the new Hay Maze, eat ice cream and have fun at the petting zoo.

Whiten said that after expenses are paid, the Heritage Fair parlays remaining proceeds for agricultural-related scholarships and other donations.

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