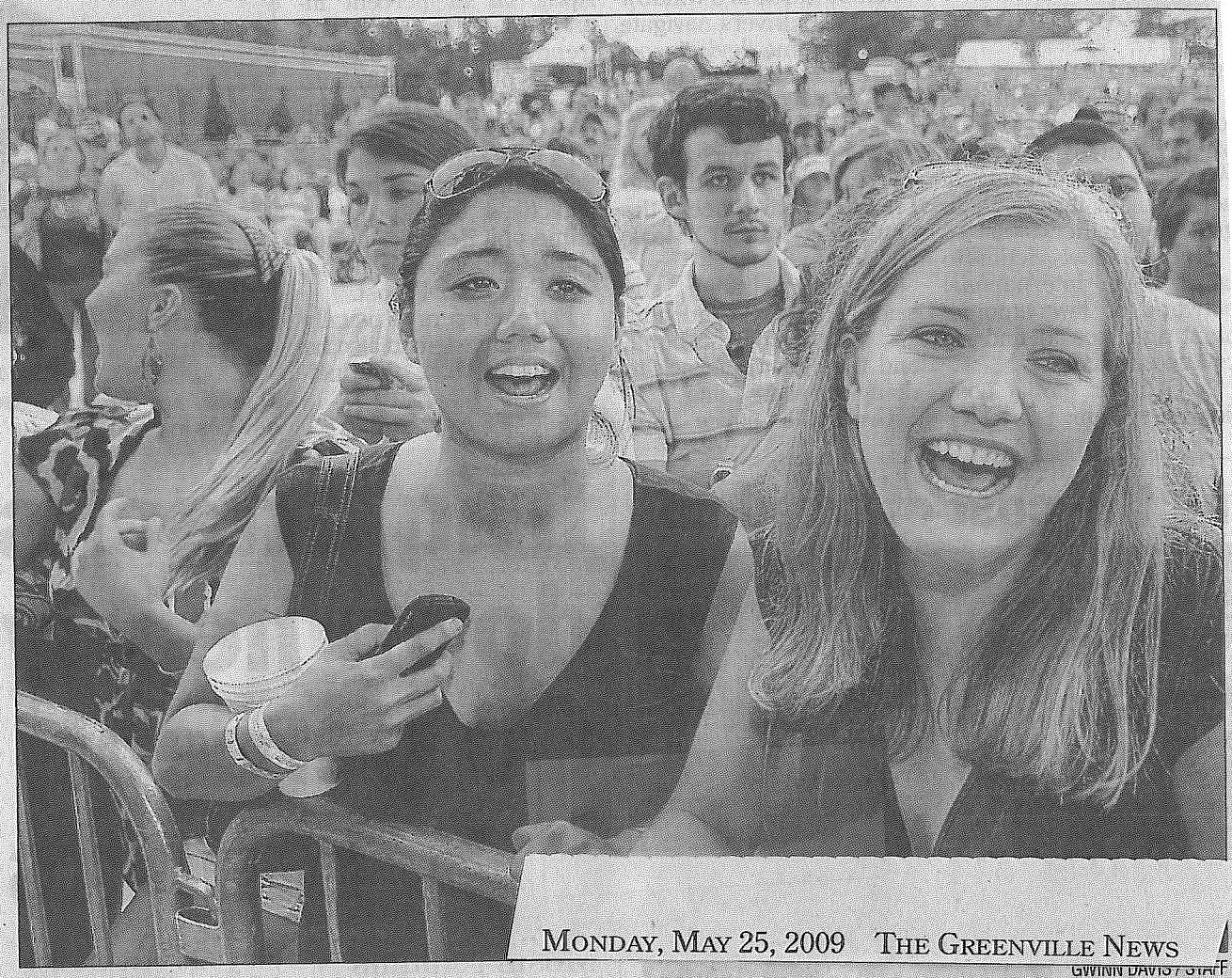
Freedom Weekend goes on today, rain or shine



GWINN DAVIS / STAFF

Crowds gathered to see Sister Hazel perform on Sunday during the rain. Balloonists are hoping for better weather tomorrow when the gates open at noon.

Festival organizers hope for flying weather today

By Eric Connor
STAFF WRITER
econnor@greenvillenews.com

The hot-air balloons of Freedom Weekend Aloft were grounded Sunday because of weather — but balloonists participating in the festival today are still hoping to take to the air if the rain and clouds can hold off.

On Sunday, low-level clouds and intermittent rain kept the colorful orbs that fill the sky over Simpsonville each Memorial Day Weekend rolled up and packed away.

All day, officials monitored radar to determine whether balloons were safe to launch but had to scrap plans for the day, Freedom Weekend executive director Keri Hall said.

Officials are hoping that conditions for flying — such as winds being less than 10 mph and the cloud ceiling being above 1,000 feet — will be favorable today, but the weather might not be much different, said Justin Lane, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Greer.

"It's basically going to be just like (Sunday)," Lane said. "It won't rain all day, but most areas will see some rain."

Whatever the weather today, Hall said, the live amphitheatre music, carnival rides, food from local vendors and special Memorial Day ceremonies of the festival will press on.

And unlike the previous three days of the festival, admission is free today. It still costs $5 to park.

Hall said the festival's attendance has dropped compared to past years, but that the off-and-on rain made it so that attendees could enjoy festivities and crews could keep the grounds in good shape.

The Memorial Day ceremonies today will be highlighted by a performance from 6:30 to 8 p.m. by the U.S. Fleet Forces Band, a collection of 50 of the U.S. Navy's best musicians. Earlier in the day, the Four Star Navy Rock Band and the Chairmen of the Board perform. Gates open at noon.