Friday event in Walhalla celebrates Lake Hartwell

BY MIKAYLA KREUZBERGER
THE JOURNAL

WALHALLA — It's time to dress up and spend Friday evening at the Oconee Heritage Center, as the museum celebrates its eighth birthday at its annual Harvest Moon Gala.

"We call it Harvest Moon because the museum opened in October, which is typically when a harvest moon appears in the sky," OHC Director and Curator Leslie White said.

The gala, White said, is a time for locals interested in the museum to stop in and enjoy the displays that highlight Oconee's long and rich history and traditions.

The semi-formal event begins at 6 p.m. at the museum and features live music from The City Street Band, in addition to appetizers served by the Walhalla Woman's Club and beer and wine.

"Redmond Boys in Seneca will also be serving oysters for $15," White said. "Everything at the gala is from Oconee County."

The gala's theme this year is all about Lake Hartwell to celebrate the lake's 50th anniversary.

According to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineer's website, Lake Hartwell, Hartwell, Ga. and Hart County, Ga. got its name because of heroine Nancy Hart, a Patriot who fought hard against British forces in Georgia's backwoods.

Fast forward to the 20th-century, Lake Hartwell's dam and reservoir was the second unit in the Savannah River Basin project, and was completed in March 1962. Construction costs rose to almost $90 million.

In addition to providing power to private companies and public cooperatives, the lake has also decreased flooding along the Savannah River Basin and provides recreational uses for locals and tourists.

The Corps' website stated that in 2000, 9.6 million people visited Lake Hartwell for recreation, making it third in a list of ten for the Corps' most popular projects in the U.S.

At the gala, guests can vote on locals' best photos of Lake Hartwell. White said first-, second- and third-place winners will be based on the amount of donations given to each photo.

There will also be a silent auction with gifts from local businesses that cater to men and women alike, White said.

"We're hoping for a really great night and a good turnout for the event," White said.

She said proceeds from the gala will go directly into the general funds account for OHC.

"We are always needing to generate funds," she said. "It's easy and fun to donate money toward specific projects of interest, but the most dire account, as of right now, is the operational account. We have to be able to keep the building open and keep staff on hand in order to get those special projects going."

Currently, OHC has eight projects that White, Assistant Curator Jennifer Moss and volunteers are working on: the England's General Store Museum in Westminster, the Southern Appalachian Farmstead on Highway 28 in Mountain Rest, Center Church in Oakway, the Heritage Reading and Research Room at OHC, the Native American canoes, The Jake Sluder Heritage Park at OHC, the Ancestors Gallery and Memorial Bricks and the OHC Classroom and Community Room.

In addition to projects, Moss said she is planning a Halloween event, and currently hosts several educational programs. Oconee Appalachian Kids is a program for children on the first Saturday of each month.

"We do crafts and plan each visit around a specific story," Moss said. "Kids really seem to enjoy OAK, as we like to call it."

To learn more about projects and programs, visit the museum's website, www.oconeeheritagecenter.org or stop by the museum, located behind the Bantam Chef. Museum hours are from noon until 6 p.m. Thursday and Friday, and from 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Saturday or by appointment.

Tickets at the door for Friday's gala are $30 for members and $35 for non-members. Oyster roast tickets are an additional $15.

Call White at (864) 638-2224 for more information.

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A 1957 downstream view of the Savannah River Basin. The Seneca River is on the left and the Tugaloo River is on the right. its 50th anniversary tonight with the Oconee Heritage Center's Harvest Moon Gala.



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Lake Hartwell filled this area in 1962 and it celebrates