

Fun Revs up at

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PICKENS — Even though Memorial Day is the official start of summer, plenty of people might consider the true kick off to be the fun-packed Blue Ridge Fest coming up this weekend.

While the favorite event will be celebrating its 12th anniversary, marketing representative for Blue Ridge Electric Co-Op, Amy Childress, is hoping to top last year's outcome.

"This thing has grown to enormous levels since the start in 1998," she said. "The entertainment is quality fun and the cruise-in cars are always just as amazing."

While the festival will go on in the warm sunshine or during a possible rain shower (the bands perform under a covered pavilion), Childress said it's an event many people enjoy attending because all proceeds go to local charities.

Last year, the festival and its attendees raised \$145,000 for 12 charities in Pickens, Anderson, Greenville and Oconee counties. The total amount of money that has been raised over the festival's lifespan amounts to a whopping \$810,000. And while always difficult, Blue Ridge Co-op appoints an employee selection committee to determine which charitable organizations will be receiving funding from the event each year.

"Having a limited number of slots to fill is never easy," she said. "Especially during these difficult economic times. Every organization is deserving."

Employees devote their "off the clock time" to make the festival as successful as possible, and Childress said it wouldn't have taken off without that very devotion.

"From working the concessions to parking to planning, this family-fun community staple certainly wouldn't be a possibility."

It's really amazing to see how hard everyone is willing to work in order to bring Blue Ridge Fest to life each year."

The classic car cruise-in will consist of cars with a 1979 make or older, Childress said. There is no cut-off for participating automobiles, as they simply come from neighboring areas and states to line

up and pop their hoods for all to admire.

The Blue Ridge Fest and its coordinators shouldn't shy away from their bragging rights, as over the years, this cruise-in takes the top spot for best classic car showcase event in the Upstate. Prepare for classic favorites like the Studebaker and those "wish-we-could-drive-em" hot rods to everything in between.

"The Fest has established a reputation among South Carolina and neighboring states as a top-notch quality event," said Cruise-In Coordinator Wayne Turner.

"Because of this reputation, the number of cars participating continues to grow and spectators can count on seeing a variety of classic cars in every color and style."

Make sure you come to the festival hungry, as a wide range of tasty goodies will be available for all to enjoy.

Entertainment on Friday night will start at 6 p.m. and go

until 10:30 with headliner Jerry Butler, featuring Puzzle with Will Ragland as Buddy Holly, Jim Quick and Coastline as well as The Flashbacks.

"Each group is fantastic," Childress said. "There will be a dance floor for those who want to shag along with the music."

On Saturday, the annual charity motorcycle ride will take off at 9:15 a.m. with Biker Bingo set to kick off at 12:30 p.m.

Registration is \$25. Bikers will leave from the festival grounds and trek 100 miles through the Foothills.

Friday nights cruise-in Beach Party is \$20 at the gate or \$15 if purchased in advance for adults. Children can get in for \$10 at the gate or \$8 in advance. Children 6 and under are FREE.

In addition to tickets being available at all Blue Ridge Co-Op facilities, Childress said you can order them over the phone by calling 1-800-240-3400.

# Blue

# Ridge

# Fest

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Special to the Daily Journal

The Blue Ridge Festival can boast about being the venue for the largest and most diverse cruise-in for classic cars in the Upstate.



Special to the Daily Journal/Messenger

**Located on the grounds of the Pickens County Blue Ridge Co-op,** the Blue Ridge Festival brings in thousands of visitors each year for A-class entertainment and plenty of fun. All proceeds go to local charities.