NC Apple Festival offers tasty fun

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A quarter million visitors — maybe more — are headed to Hendersonville Sept. 2-5 for the 70th annual North Carolina Apple Festival.

And the town is ready to entertain them with four days of music, arts and crafts, family-friendly merry-making and of course, apples.

"It gives us the opportunity to put on the best show we can," said Hendersonville City Councilman Jeff Miller, also a downtown merchant. "It just shows our culture. From what I understand, the hotel rooms are full. A lot of people come and stay for for the whole event."

The festival has a $12 million impact on the Hendersonville economy, executive director David Nicholson said.

The Apple Festival has become the region's biggest family festival, Nicholson said. Turnout comes from both Western North Carolina and from Upstate South Carolina, with an impressive number making the trip from Charlotte, he said. There's plenty to enjoy, not the least being apples grown by Henderson County orchards. The festival will have 15 booths with fresh apples. And there are more treats: caramel apples, apple slushies, fried apple pies, etc.

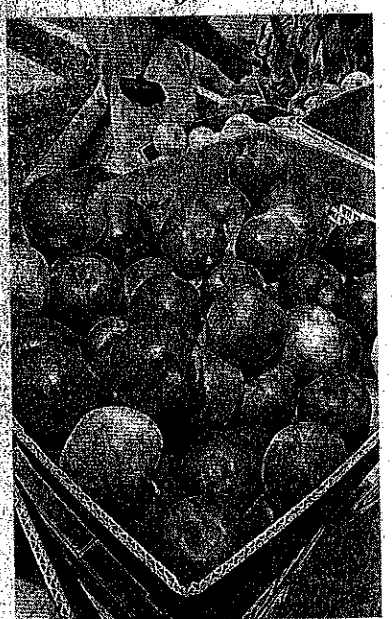
The festival also includes the 35th annual Henderson County Gem and Mineral Show at the Whitmire Activity Center at 310 Lily Pond Road, Friday's Kiwanis pancake breakfast at First Baptist Church at 4th Avenue and anf Washington Street, a Friday apple recipe contest in the First Citizens Bank Plaza at the corner of Main Street and 6th Avenue, a street fair with 200 vendors, a children's carnival at the Wells Fargo Bank and the Visitor Center parking lots, Saturday's Hendersonville Lions Club Big Apple Breakfast, a Saturday tour of local orchards, a quilt show, Saturday rides in vintage aircraft at the WNC Air Museum and much more.

The whole schedule can be found at www.ncapplefestival.org/

The big event is the annual King Apple Parade at 2:30 p.m. Monday along Main Street downtown, with about 70 units. The festival goes on rain or shine.

As for parking, it will be busy especially on Saturday and Monday, Nicholson said, but there are plenty of private pay lots around downtown, many of them operated by area non-profit organization.

The festival is alcohol free, but visitors can find hard apple cider, beers and other adult beverages in restaurants and pubs around town. If you are coming for a particular event, allow travel time for possible traffic delays heading into downtown Hendersonville off Intestate 26.



JOHN COUTLAKIS/GANNETT PHOTO
Many Upstate residents will head to Hendersonville over Labor Day weekend for the North Carolina Apple Festival.