Pickens Azalea Festival blossoms into 3-day event

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Residents and visitors soon will flock to downtown Pickens, where the Azalea Festival will kick off its 25th year with festivities from live music to a classic car cruise-in.

The Pickens Azalea Festival will be April 16-18 on Main Street and in Legacy Square, according to Russ Gantt, coordinator of the festival.

The normally two-day event has been stretched into three days this year in celebration of the festival's 25th anniversary, Gantt said.

"The festival has grown, and I think it brings people together to enjoy a day or three days of entertainment and activities that are free to the community," he said. "They can come and enjoy some quality entertainment at no charge."

Pickens City Councilman Connie Bowers said the festival brings people to Pickens and allows them to see what the town has to offer.

He said visitors also spend money in the area.

"It's a great festival," he said. "It's just good exposure for the town ... I think with the streetscape on Main Street now with the azaleas it really adds a lot to it."

Last year about 15,000 people came to the Azalea Festival, according to Gantt, and organizers hope to get about 20,000 people over the three days this year.

He said activities on April 16 will begin at 7 p.m. with amusement rides and live music, and on April 17 things will kick off with a car cruise-in and more live music at 7 p.m.

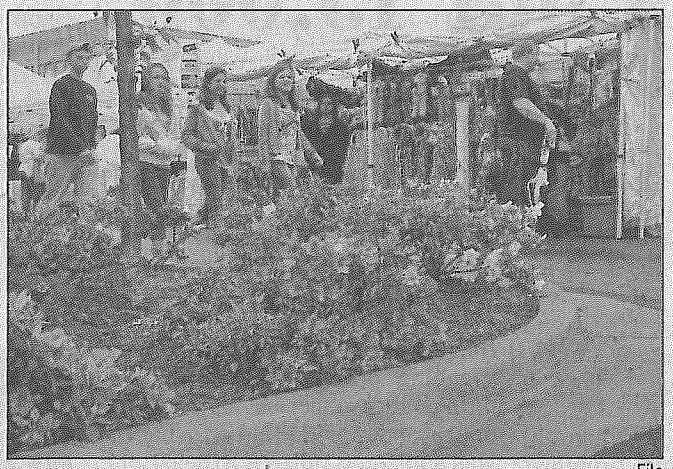
Last year, there were about 125 cars involved in the cruise-in, and Gantt said this year organizers hope to get about 150 to 200.

On April 18, festival-goers will find live music and entertainment on three stages, almost 100 vendors with arts and crafts, carriage rides, tethered hot air balloon rides if weather permits and plenty of food from funnel cakes and hot dogs to gyros and baked goods.

Gantt said at 8:30 a.m. on April 18 there will be a 5K walk-run and said at 10 a.m. the festival gets underway.

He said some things, including the carriage, hot air balloon and amusement rides, do have fees but said admission to the festival is free.

"It's just a way for the town to get together," Gantt said. "It brings people who are maybe not from around the Pickens area or in Pickens County to the town and to the area."



File

Like last year's Pickens Azalea Festival, this year's festival in downtown Pickens will provide food, fun and flowers in appreciation of the spring season.

YOU CAN GO

■ For more information, go to www.pickenschamber.org/AzaleaFest.