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JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Scott Lawing, front, checks under the hood of Joe Patterson's car, back, during the Classic Car Cruise-In on Friday afternoon at Seneca Fest. For more photos, see Page A8.

Seneca Fest kicks off

BY ANDREW MOORE
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — It took a mere matter of hours for the tone to be set at SenecaFest as the Classic Car Cruise-In demolished last year's total participation for the event by late-afternoon.

The fourth annual Memorial Weekend festival kicked off Friday afternoon, highlighted by the Cruise-In at Norton-Thompson Park that featured an expected 250 or more classic muscle cars. And while downtown Seneca's subdued action in the 90-degree heat was something of a calm before the storm early Friday, there was still plenty of activity, as cars rolled in, vendors

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set up shop, and barbeque cookers unloaded their trucks.

"Two years ago, we might have had a hundred or so people on a Friday," Councilman Joel Ward said while he was helping direct traffic. "We're expecting thousands here tonight."

The fourth installment of the festival has been deliberately geared toward making Seneca Fest a legitimate two-day event, said Events Coordinator Riley Johnson.

"We've got the Cruise-In on a Friday. We've got more music acts on Friday. We have helicopter rides," Johnson said. "We're spreading a lot more activities out across the two days instead of packing it all in on Saturday."

Friday featured five different musical acts, the most well known being Ten Toes Up and 440. Just yards from the rows of powerful cars at the Cruise-In, Ram Cat Alley was buzzing with activity, with a student art show, Arts on the Alley and the work of Danielle Howle.

On Friday, The Lunney House Museum officially opened to the general public, as well.

Meanwhile, even during Friday's action, Seneca officials were already talking about today and the much-anticipated performance by Southern rock band Atlanta Rhythm Section. ARS performs at 8 tonight.

Today's festivities begin 12 hours earlier, at 8 a.m., with a fun run and walk, which is followed up by a 5K race through historic downtown Seneca 30 minutes later.

From then on, the heart of Seneca will become something of a carnival, featuring music, arts and crafts vendors, barbeque contests, dance performances, balloon clowns and helicopter rides.

Officials seemed plenty pleased with Friday's kickoff to an event expected to bring in as many as 30,000 people over the course of the weekend.

"So far, so good," said Councilman Scott Durham.

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