USA CELEBRATES



REX BROWN | THE JOURNAL

From left, Katie Green, Madison Kelly and Houston Kelly enjoy the festivities during Clemsonfest at the Clemson University Beach on Thursday.

Clemsonfest kicks off local July 4 festivities

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — The day before the country celebrates its birthday today, Clemsonfest provided an early start to the local Independence Day festivities at the Clemson University Beach on Thursday night.

The Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce hosted the event with sponsors Oconee Medical Center and the City of Clemson. The celebration included live music, children's games and a fireworks show.

"It's the only fireworks over the lake," said Lindsey Newton, of the

SEE **FESTIVITIES**, PAGE **A6**



REX BROWN | THE JOURNAL

Rocco Cioffoletti salutes as the flag is raised during Clemsonfest at the Clemson University Beach on Thursday.

Clemson Area Chamber of Commerce. "It's a great family event. It caters to adults and children alike."

Newton worked with Ruthie Millar, who is the former membership director at the chamber, to plan the event.

"We appreciate all the support of the people who actually attend the event and the vendors and all of the volunteer efforts that go into making this event a success," Millar said.

Newton said Thursday's celebration marked the 21st year of Clemsonfest at the recreation area location formerly known as Y Beach. She said this year's event was very exciting and had changes in entertainment, including a barbershop quartet and three-piece ensemble, Sorelle, as well as an entertainment sponsor, AnMed Health. Millar said AnMed Health also provided a cooling station, and for the second year, Publix hosted a kid's area.

"It's a great event for fireworks, fun, food and family," Millar said.

Area resident Joyce Mangum attended Clemsonfest with her sister, Gracie Griffith, and her two grandchildren. Mangum said her favorite part of the celebration each year is the fireworks. She said she attends the event with members from her Bible group at Concord Baptist Church. As her family sat in their lawn chairs on the field, she began to wave down her church members.

"They just haven't all gotten here yet." Mangum said of the members of her Bible group. "They've been coming a long time, (and) I've been coming three years with them."

Griffith said this year was her first time attending Clemsonfest.

"I didn't know they had this; it's really nicer than I was anticipating," Griffith said. "I wish I would've come earlier with my grandchildren. Next year, if I can, I would like to come earlier and get into the festivities."

Kim Burden, director of the physician network for AnMed Health, said this is the first year AnMed has collaborated with Clemsonfest.

AnMed had special "cool zones" and offered fans and water to those in attendance.

"As a result of our transition from Clemson Health Center to AnMed Health Clemson, we just wanted to be able to share the information with the community that we are opening up AnMed Health Clemson and transitioning our Clemson Family Medicine over to that location at 885 Tiger Boulevard," Burden said.

Many locals visited the event with their families and children. Jeremy Earnhardt was there with his two daughters, who played games in front of the inflatables.

"It's just such a nice day and a good atmosphere, and the kids can have a good time," Earnhardt said.

Food vendors offered funnel cakes, homemade ice cream and hot dogs. Ricky Sanders from The Cooking Christians also attended the event with his family and prepared food for the crowd. He said the group has attended Clemsonfest for around eight or nine years.

"We do the hamburgers (and) the hot dogs," Cooking Christians representative Jimmy Sanders said. "It's just a good crowd."

"It's a good local thing — we're local," Ricky Sanders added. "It's easy for us to get to. Everybody's super nice here."



REX BROWN | THE JOURNAL

nt enjoys a hulu hoop with friends during Clemsonfest at the Clemson Beach on Thursday.

Clemsonfest opened with the national anthem provided by barbershop quartet Partners in Rhyme, which also entertained the crowd with a medley of patriotic tunes. The Carolina Coast Band followed with a performance that included country and beach music.

christina@upstatetoday.com | (864) 973-6681