What to do around Oconee County on Independence Day

BY CHRISTINA CLEVELAND
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The Fourth of July is merely a day away, and for county residents who are staying in town, there are several fun family events to attend for the celebration. Starting today until late Friday evening, there will be plenty of patriotic community events filled with food, fun and fireworks.

INDEPENDENCE EVE IN WALHALLA

At 6 p.m. today, the City of Walhalla will host its third annual Independence Eve at the Walhalla soccer field.

Vanessa Penton, executive director of the Walhalla Area Chamber of Commerce, said the event is free and will have food booths with concessions, including hamburgers, hotdogs, tacos and desserts such as snow cones.

"The first year we had a good crowd show up," Penton said.

Penton said a disc jockey from R&J Live Sound is providing music, and there are also bouncy games for children. The highlight of Independence Eve is its ice cream contest, with the winner taking home a first-place ribbon.

"I haven't got any signups yet. ... We'll take them right up to (the start of the event) though," Penton said about the contest. "We would love for them to come and put it to the test."

FILE PHOTOS

Top: Fireworks go off over the main stage at last year's City of Seneca Fourth of July Celebration.

Inset: An attendee shows her patriotism at Seneca's annual Independence Day gala.

At right: A couple dances to the music during the festivities.

Below: Well-known rhythm-and-blues and beach-music group The Tams will once again headline Seneca's annual celebration. Last year, the group carried on with its performance despite pouring rain.





Carolina Fireworks will put on the city's firework show that will begin sometime after 9 p.m.

CITY OF SENECA FOURTH OF JULY CELEBRATION FEATURING THE TAMS

The City of Seneca is hosting its annual celebration at Gignilliat Park on Friday. Its headlining musical act is legendary rhythm-and-blues and beach-music group The Tams.

The Norwines will open the show around 5 p.m. followed by Atlanta-based band Funk Factory 5 at 6 p.m.

Seneca events coordinator Riley Johnson said there will be a bouncy house for kids, and vendors at the park are selling food and beverages, but the event is alcohol-free.

At 8 p.m., Mayor Dan Alexander and Seneca City Council will offer a welcome followed by the national anthem by Doug Norwine. Johnson said he predicts somewhere between 4,000 and 5,000 people attended the celebration last year.

Johnson said the fireworks show will run for around 20 minutes, and for those who cannot make it to the park, the show can be viewed from all angles within the city.

"People come for all over to see our fireworks show," Johnson said. "Bring the family and come out and enjoy the night."

JULY 4 AT SOUTH COVE

To see the county's most patriotic golf cart parade, join campers and area residents at South Cove for its lineup of American-inspired golf carts on Friday.

"They'll decorate them all up as American flags," Super-





intendent Stephen Schutt said. "Several people dress up as the Statue of Liberty."

Schutt said several local businesses sponsored this year's parade and have provided prizes to award the most patriotic golf carts. Schutt said Wild Water has donated zip line passes; Sweet Treats of Walhalla has donated four laser tag and arcade tickets and A New Salon of Seneca has donated a free hair cut and one week of tanning for the contest. According to Schutt, Oconee County is putting a package together for free camping, and there will also be a gift basket from Tri-County Boat Rental.

"We're trying to give out as many as we can — until all the prizes are gone," Schutt said.

Dakota McAllister and Country Family Traditions will perform a mix of country and rock 'n' roll starting at 7:30 p.m. at the recreation building at the park. Schutt said visitors will be able to view the local firework displays from the park around 9:15 p.m. He said from the South Cove location, attendees will be able to see the firework shows from The Tiki Hut and at Gignilliat Park.

"Where the band is performing you'll be able to sit and watch the fireworks and listen to the band," he said.

Schutt said even with last year's rain, the golf cart parade had more than 40 participants. The day of activities will start at noon with a water slide that will be open until 8 p.m. Cliff Bars has also donated around 4,000 free Cliff Bars for people who show up that day. The annual patriotic golf cart parade will begin at 6:30 p.m. The event is open to the public.

DAY OF FUN AT OCONEE STATE PARK

For a bit of adventure, bring the family for a morning and afternoon full of games at Oconee State Park on Friday. The day of fun at the park is free and for all ages.

Tabitha Mosley, who is an administrative assistant with park services, said that starting at 9 a.m. the park will host field-day games including watermelon eating. Beginning at 1 p.m., park goers can participate in water games like belly flop and cannon ball contests.

Mosley said the park has hosted the event every July Fourth and it attracts a large number of children, but the field day and water games are for all ages. From 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. the park will host square dancing at the barn.

"We have callers that call the dancers and some cloggers to perform during intermission," Mosley said. "We've done this every year."

The event is free and open to the public. The cost to square dance at the park is $2 per person.

HILLBILLY DAY IN MOUNTAIN REST

The annual Hillbilly Day festival will host a day of clogging, square dancing and crafting at the Mountain Rest Community Club on Friday.

Community club member Cindy Bunn said the day will include bluegrass music from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. and square dancing from 10:30-11 a.m. The day will also include a best-dressed hillbilly contest and food such as snow cones and homemade ice cream. Bunn said proceeds from the food will go toward maintenance of the hillbilly grounds.

Visitors can participate in grease-poll climbing, arts and crafts, vendors, book-making and pottery. Bunn said parking is free and attendees should plan on bringing a lawn chair for seating.

"For over 50 years it's been going on," Bunn said. "So it's a tradition for the community, and it's free — lots of fun for the kids and the whole family."

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