

# Get the party started



JIM BANDY | SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

Thousands of people are expected to descend upon Seneca this weekend, with the 11th annual Seneca Fest getting underway tonight at Jazz on the Alley. The entirety of Friday and Saturday's events will be held at the Gignilliat Community Center and Gignilliat Field, seen here during one of last year's concerts.



## 11th annual Seneca Fest officially kicks off tonight

BY ERIC SPROTT  
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — After more than half a year's worth of planning, the new-look Seneca Fest is set to get underway tonight with Jazz on the Alley.

But as opposed to years past, tonight's festivities will mark the 11th annual event's only foray into the downtown area, as Friday and Saturday's events will take place exclusively in and around

the Gignilliat Community Center, with music set to take center stage this year.

"It should be great," Seneca events coordinator Riley Johnson said. "Everybody has worked together, we've got a good team and everything is coming together. We also have a lot of people in town from around the country, and we're glad to have them."

SEE SENECA FEST, PAGE A5

### Today

6:30-9 p.m. Jazz on the Alley, Ram Cat Alley

### Friday

4 p.m. Gignilliat Field gates open

4-10 p.m. Arts and crafts

5 p.m. Talent search/battle of the bands

7:30 p.m. Battle of the bands winner announced; national anthem

8 p.m. Battle of bands winner

9 p.m. Mother's Finest concert

### Saturday

Noon Wrestling at Gignilliat Gym, featuring Rock and Roll Express

Noon Gignilliat Field gates open

Noon-10 p.m. Arts and crafts

5 p.m. McKayla Reece concert

6:30 p.m. National anthem

7 p.m. Sammy Kershaw concert

9 p.m. Aaron Tippin concert

# SENECA FEST: Starts at Jazz tonight

FROM PAGE A1

“Our hotels are having people check in, and they’re going to eat at our restaurants and stay at our hotels, so that’s a good thing.”

Funk Factory will be the featured act at Jazz on the Alley tonight — with Johnson expecting a crowd of nearly 1,000 people — before the action moves across town Friday afternoon. Both Friday and Saturday, there will be activities for children and numerous arts and crafts vendor, in association with the Blue Ridge Arts Center, set up between the armory and Gignilliat Field.

A battle of the bands will be held Friday evening, with the winner earning the right to open for the headlining act, Mother’s Finest, which will take the stage at 9 p.m.

At noon Saturday, a wrestling show featuring recently

inducted WWE Hall of Fame tag team the Rock and Roll Express will be held at the Gignilliat Gym. Country music performers McKayla Reece, Sammy Kershaw and Aaron Tippin will take the stage between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m.

And after days of heavy rains and storm, the forecast for the entirety of Seneca Fest looks favorable, as the skies will begin clearing today, with a forecasted high of 73 degrees. The forecast then calls for sunny skies Friday and Saturday, with highs of 83 and 87 degrees, respectively.

“I’m excited, and the best thing about it is that the weather looks really, really good,” Johnson said.

Expressing his excitement, Seneca Mayor Dan Alexander echoed Johnson’s comments, adding he’s hopeful everyone in attendance can also stop

and reflect on how Memorial Day weekend is about more than just the unofficial start to summer.

“We’re looking forward to it, and we’re going to have a lot of great entertainment,” he said. “But we want to reflect on this weekend with Memorial Day, and we’re very grateful to all the men and women that have fought for each and every one of us so we can enjoy the freedoms we have and to be able to go to events like Seneca Fest.

“I hope we can thank them this weekend, and we’re looking forward to everybody having a great time.”

Tickets for Seneca Fest, which Johnson said will be entirely smoke free, can be purchased at the gate, or at city hall today and Friday. Johnson said tickets are \$10 per show.

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