

South Carolina Apple Festival back for 56th year

BY STEPHANIE IADRNICKEK
THE JOURNAL

WESTMINSTER — The longest-running festival in South Carolina has returned to Westminster.

Several pageants and the Westminster Rotary golf tournament already kicked off the 56th annual South Carolina Apple Festival, but festivities are in full swing this week.

With numbers of attendees averaging around 10,000 each year, the festival provides a variety

of activities to keep every member of the family entertained.

The festival will peak today and Saturday with numerous events including the Apple Festival parade, a children's craft booth, kiddie rides, rock climbing and the 27th annual Westminster IPRA Rodeo. Something new to this year's Apple Festival is a NASCAR simulator, which will be set up on Saturday from 9 a.m.-2 p.m.

Westminster Mayor Brian Ramey said the

commitment and dedication of the Long Creek and Westminster communities to come together every year for 56 years is unmatched.

"We hope this encourages our visitors to stick around and see what else we have to offer," he said. "These two communities are shining examples of blending the Appalachian mountain and foothills cultures to create an event that brings thousands to



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Susan Hollifield of Hollifield's Orchard was one of several apple growers who set up shop at last year's Apple Festival in Westminster.

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our area each year in celebration of our local apple growers."

John Prater and the Benders will heat up this afternoon with a little blues and rock at 2 p.m., followed by Second Time Around at 3:30 p.m. and Adam Carter at 5:30 p.m.

Several bands will take the stage on Saturday, including Silver Dollar Gang, David Tilley, New Dixie Storm, Conservation Theory and Silver Eagle Band.

Ramey said the festival is organized by a group of nine volunteers. He encourages everyone attending the festival to take

a step back and imagine the amount of work that's invested by those nine people to put on an event such as the Apple Festival.

"Estimates of around 10,000 attendees each year show that these volunteers are doing something right," he said. "And with 20 different food vendors and almost 100 craft vendors, there will surely be something to please everyone."

Arts and crafts vendors will line the streets today and Saturday, and a quilt show will be on display at the Westminster Depot from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. today and 10 a.m.-4 p.m. on Saturday.

The Apple Festival

parade will begin at the Fred's parking lot at 4:30 p.m. today and wind its way to historic Main Street before wrapping up at Palmetto Home Place. And the 27th annual Westminster IPRA Rodeo will start at 8 p.m. tonight.

At 10 a.m. on Saturday, the 13th annual South Carolina Apple Festival Car Show will take place on East Main Street in the grass parking area beside Hardee's. A fundraiser for Crime Stoppers of Oconee County, the car show will

include motorcycles and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

"We hope you can come and enjoy a few days in our hometown and experience a little of what we all love about Westminster," Ramey said. "And don't forget to visit our outstanding local merchants and restaurants while here. They will be looking for you. And I hope to see you there myself."

For more information, call (864) 647-5316.

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