

'Diminishing breed'

Pumpkintown Festival gearing up for 41st year

BY RILEY MORNINGSTAR
THE JOURNAL

PUMPKINTOWN — In one week, a town with an unofficial population of around 200 will explode due to an influx of 50,000 people.

The 41st annual Pumpkin Festival, sponsored by the Pumpkintown Community Club, begins at 9 a.m. Oct. 12, and the tiny town will graciously host its annual guests.

Chairman Buddy Cox has been involved with the festival for almost 30 years and says the massive crowd will be greeted by around 120 volunteers — the vast majority of the town.

"It's somewhat mind boggling but, once you've gotten used to it — I somewhat thrive on organized chaos — but I'm used to doing things like this. I've tried to carry on what that community means to people and the history of it," Cox said. "I do it for the people that stay involved with the club and still have the love for the community and the people there."

It's not just about his neighbors in Pumpkintown, he said. The annual festival has several "regulars" of sorts who make the seasonal trek.

"We have people come from all over the country," Cox said. "We have families that have been coming for years, and some families have their family gathering at the festival. That's their gathering, and we have numerous people that do that."

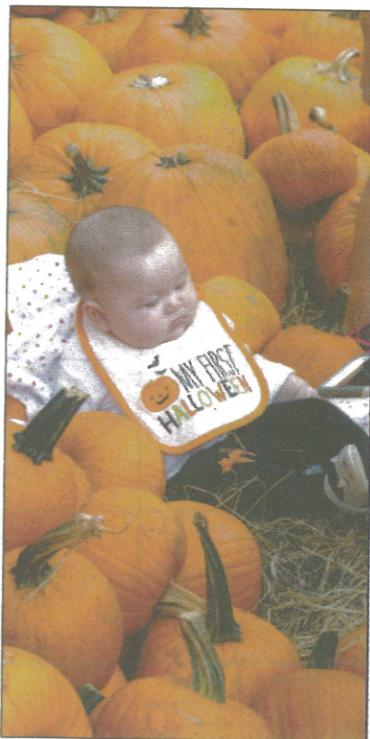
There will be a parade, 152 arts and crafts booths, music, clogging and carnival rides.

Cox said the dining options could be described best as "you name it and we've got the food."

A greased pole climb is also a tradition at the event that takes place later in the day. Children come ready to get messy for their chance to grab the flag at the top.



The family-friendly festival includes several activities just for children to enjoy.



"It's pretty nasty at times," Cox said. "We put plenty of Vaseline on that pole and it takes a pile of kids about 15-20 minutes



WANT TO GO?

What: 41st annual Pumpkin Festival
Where: 5301 Dacusville Hwy, Pickens
When: Oct. 12, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

for them to wear down the Vaseline to grab the tag at the top."

Having a hometown festival with so much substance is what leads Cox to continue his role with the festival for almost three decades.

"I do it for the community and do it because of certain people in the community club," he said. "I do it because I think the hometown festivals are a diminishing breed. We try to bring back some of that every year, and we invited people to come and be part of the community and share the heritage of the community."

Though the community loves hosting the event, it takes all the available volunteers being on their "A game" to pull the massive event off, according to Cox.

"It is a daunting task to know you've got to spearhead something of this magnitude and fit into your schedule," Cox said. "I don't sit in an armchair up on stage with people bringing me sweet tea. I've got my sleeves rolled up. Being able to take a moment and look through the woods and hear the music and see thousands of people in front of it, to me that's the magic of it."

"This small place with such a skeleton crew of volunteers pulls this off, and that it's an enjoyable time for people all over South Carolina and the country to be able to come there and enjoy it."

Even with Clemson University having a home football game and other fall festivals taking place locally, Cox said none of it impacts the expected attendance number.

"It never does," he said. "It doesn't hurt us."



PHOTOS SPECIAL TO THE JOURNAL

The unofficial population of Pumpkintown hovers around 200, but it is anticipated to grow astronomically to 50,000 people in a week for the 41st annual Pumpkin Festival.