

Visitors take a hike during Appalachian Trail Day at Brasstown Bald

By Chad Stack
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Brasstown Bald played host to Appalachian Trail Day at the end of June, celebrating the 79 miles of the trail that runs between Towns and Union counties.

The day featured many activities for visitors to Brasstown Bald.

Georgia's Appalachian Trail Club, along with several hikers and volunteers, put on an event called "A Day in the Life" of the Appalachian Trail to teach people how to pack their backpacks properly and hike the trail safely.

A bus took visitors to the top of the Bald, where people

could watch an Emmy-nominated documentary called "Trail Magic: The Grandma Gatewood Story" in the mountaintop theater, or they could take a tour inside the museum.

Other events included a scavenger hunt, a crosscut saw demonstration, and listening to music and stories from hikers.

In the event of a storm or when a tree falls blocking the path, AT Club volunteers make their way to the reported site to clear out what they refer to as "blowdown" using handsaws and axes.

"We are only allowed to use chainsaws in non-wilderness areas, and over half of the trail here is in the wilderness area," AT volunteer Mike Cor-

disco said. "There are a few different apps that allow hikers to mark a section on the trail that is blocked and take a picture of the blowdown."

"The data then will be sent to the Georgia AT Club, and a group of three or four volunteers will hike to that exact spot and start the process to clear the blowdown that is blocking the trail."

Throughout the event, Cordisco and fellow volunteer Robert Collins demonstrated crosscutting with handsaws.

Georgia AT Club Member Joe Boone talked about the history of the trail and the different sites in Towns and Union counties that are short distances, allowing anyone to get out and

hike the trails and say they have walked the AT.

Also in attendance was longtime Appalachian Trail hiker Lue Elder, who started hiking the trail in 1978. In 2004, when he was 62 years old, he and his wife Marry Elder hiked the whole trail.

Elder works at Brasstown Bald, and during the AT Day celebration, he talked about the importance of how to properly

prepare a backpack for a hike.

People from all over visited Brasstown Bald on June 29, including Carey Moorman from West Melbourne, Florida, who stopped into Blairsville after returning from taking his son to college and made his way up to the Bald to experience AT Day.

Another Trail Day visitor was Vincent Defazzio, who spends a couple weeks each

summer traveling the country with his family. This summer, the Defazzios started their travels by visiting the Brasstown Bald and hiking parts of the trail.

The Georgia Appalachian Trail Club looks to promote the trail through education and recreational activities, with an emphasis on protecting forests, natural resources and wilderness areas.



Visitors to the June 29 Appalachian Trail Day at the Brasstown Bald Visitors Center. Photo by Chad Stack



Georgia Appalachian Trail Club members demonstrating how to use a handsaw during AT Day last month. Photo by Chad Stack

Fairgrounds...from Page 1A



A red, white and blue firework embodying the patriot mood during the 2019 Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds Fireworks Show. Photo by Chad Stack

many visitors were able to take advantage of the long weekend to celebrate with family and friends.

"This is a wonderful event, and we love that small-town feel that Towns County offers," Tony and Dawna Pabon said. "We moved here from South Florida last year, and we really love it here and enjoy the family-friendly atmosphere."

Fairgrounds volunteers grilled hot dogs and served drinks to guests, and the Lions Club took donations at the gate as visitors poured into the epic patriotic party.

"I'm really pleased with the turnout this year," said Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason. "We were supposed to open the gates at 6 p.m., but people started coming in at 5 p.m."

"Usually, we have a thunderstorm, and this time it looks like we're going to miss the storms. It's a huge crowd for us, with lots and lots of people in town."

Closing out the Fourth of July celebration, the



Some face-painting fun at the family-friendly Fourth of July event at the Fairgrounds. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Fairgrounds presented its longest firework display ever, producing awe upon many of the spectators' faces as the sky over the baseball field lit up for 40 minutes.

In years past, the

fireworks display has usually only gone on for about 20 minutes, but with plenty of donations from the community, Thomason was able to extend the fireworks show another 20 minutes in 2019.



The Chris Clinton Band featuring Chris and Crystal Clinton performed for several hours during the Independence Day celebration at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds. Photo by Chad Stack

Boat Parade...from Page 1A

community, because we have people coming in from out of town to enjoy our area and the beautiful lake."

While the unity of people was important to attendees, some also wanted to make clear the need to remember those who have fought and are still fighting for the freedom of this country.

"It's important to honor a country where you're free to be able to do the stuff that we can still do, even for the people that we may not agree with," said attendee Anna Shirley. "It's about honoring those that provide that freedom, and honoring our unity as a country and coming together as a whole to keep the freedoms that we have."

"The fireworks and everything are fun and nice, but it's most important to remember why we are here and celebrate that."



It was red, white and blue all the way for the Lake Chatuge Fourth of July Boat Parade. Photo by Jarrett Whitener



The boat parade on Lake Chatuge was particularly breathtaking with the gorgeous mountain and sky backdrop on Independence Day. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Turf...from Page 1A



Frank McClure Memorial Stadium is getting upgraded seating on the stadium bleachers. Photo by Chad Stack

installed using the chairs out of the Bill P. Kendall Gymnasium,

so people will have actual seats to sit in when the 2019-2020

football season begins.