

11th Annual Moonshine Cruiz-In revs into gear despite rainy weather

By Todd Forrest
Towns County Herald
Staff Writer

Reminiscent of bootleggers avoiding the revenue man, visitors to the 11th Annual Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In spent the weekend dodging rain showers.

During the event's previous 10 years, the only rumble heard in and around the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds has been the reverberating purr of big block engines feasting on mixtures of filtered oxygen and

high-octane gasoline.

This year, however, Thunderbirds were joined by thunderstorms, as Mother Nature provided a slippery surface and a cloudy backdrop to the popular Hiawassee car show.

"The rain has affected us a lot and we don't have the numbers that we want, but I'm thankful for the ones that did come," said event organizer and Moonshine Cruiz-In founder Rakes Parrish.

Thursday, July 11, acted as the kickoff day for the Cruiz-In, with vendor setup and ve-

hicle registration taking place before the cars rolled out to the Hiawassee Town Square for a Downtown Block Party.

The Sandbar Grill hosted a Kickoff Welcome Bash later on Thursday.

Friday started off with a 10 a.m. Grand Opening, followed by live music getting underway at 11 a.m. with Jerry & Ronnie performing at the Frontier Village.

At 6:30 p.m., a parade of classic cars pulled out of Mayor's Park, traveling through town and eventually ending up at Lake Chatuge Lodge, which featured live music by Steven Phillips.

Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton and his band headlined Saturday's live music lineup, performing at 1 p.m.

Awards and prizes were handed out at 4:30 p.m. on Saturday, followed by a concert at Anderson Music Hall featuring Box Tops, Association and The Grass Roots at 7 p.m.

Like many Cruiz-In regulars, a gloomy weather forecast couldn't dissuade Wayne Wilson of Cumming and son Scott Wilson of Savannah from bringing the collective family in their respective Chevrolets, a 1955 Bel Air and 1972 Chevelle.

Scott has been making the drive for the last six years,



The 11th Annual Georgia Mountain Moonshine Cruiz-In featured more than 300 gorgeous cars at the Fairgrounds last week. Photo by Lowell Nicholson

while Wayne has made the trip for the last three Moonshine Cruiz-Ins.

"We've been here for the last few years, and we've always had beautiful weather, but this year, the weather really killed the crowds," Wayne said. "But we're here and we're having a good time, so that's all that matters."

"I think the crowds were a little better on (Saturday) because it was clear in the morning. I believe everyone was anticipating the rain, so they showed up in the morning then started to filter out before the afternoon."

The father-son duo of Wayne and Scott Wilson might have brought the fam, but it was

obvious the Bel Air and Chevelle were their babies.

"We've had the two cars for about six to eight years, and I'd say we've put 4,000-plus hours of work into each of them," Wayne said.

"The (Chevelle) started out as a stock six-liter, but it has a Vortech Supercharger, it's air and water intercooled and has a full cage," Scott added. "We autocross and road race it, but it still has air conditioning and cruise control."

"It's putting out 543 (horsepower) at the rear wheels, but when we drive it on the road, we're still getting about 24 miles per gallon."

According to Parrish, approximately 400 cars regis-

tered this year with roughly 60 no-shows, while 53 vendors registered but only 18 elected to brave the elements.

"Over the last few years I've seen the numbers drop," he said. "We had bigger crowds when we were able to hold it later in the month. I think people take their summer vacations on the Fourth of July, so holding it the weekend after isn't the best time."

"I would like to try and move the dates to later in July. That's when we had lines of cars coming in from both directions and we were filling all the campsites. So, I think if we change the date, we'll see that again."



Rain put a damper on this year's Moonshine Cruiz-In, though the turnout was still good, all things considered. Photo by Todd Forrest

Fair...from Page 1A

visitors will be able to take in all the arts and crafts the Fair is known for, as well as the Pioneer Village of yesteryear mountain traditions.

The Exhibit Hall is another can't-miss opportunity for guests of the Fairgrounds, as it showcases the history of the Georgia Mountain Fair and houses other exhibits, including the Kimbrell Collection of antique reed organs, an antique farm museum, information on local civic groups and more.

Of course, the 69th Annual Georgia Mountain Fair Parade will take place on the first Saturday of the Fair, on July 20 at 11 a.m., and will start at South State Bank and end at the Fairgrounds.

The parade will feature its annual float contest, with \$6,000 in prize money to be split between the best float builders.

Towns County native Bob Cloer donated \$5,000 in prize money for the contest last year, which sparked much interest among businesses and individuals in the community to get involved building floats for the parade.

And thanks to an excellent parade turnout in 2018, Cloer committed another donation this year, upping the amount another \$1,000 from last year.

Area residents will want to make sure to line the streets of Downtown Hiawassee as the



"Welcome to the Georgia Mountain Fair - The Showplace of the Mountains." Photo by Lowell Nicholson

69th Annual Georgia Mountain Fair Parade rolls through town on Saturday.

"I think the parade is going to be bigger than it's ever been before. We already have 25 float applications," Thomason said.

The theme for this year's parade is "Making Memories Since 1950," so the 2019 parade will honor mountain heritage and celebrate the everlasting memories that have been made in the community.

Monday, July 22, will be the ever-popular Miss Georgia Mountain Fair Pageant, which will take place at 8 p.m. inside Anderson Music Hall.

"It's still not too late to get in the pageant," Thomason said. "We're still taking applications, and we need more girls to

enter."

Admission to the Fair is \$12 for a one-day pass, \$33 for a pass valid any three days, and \$90 for a Fun Fair Pass, which includes access for all nine days of the Fair. Music shows are included in ticket prices, and children 12 and under get in free.

Tuesday, July 23, is Military Day at the Fair, and all veterans or active-duty servicemembers get in free that day.

Parking is free, though midway rides are an additional charge, and all tickets are available at the gates.

For more information, check out GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com.



Wayne Wilson's 1955 Chevrolet Bel Air next to his son Scott's 1972 Chevrolet Chevelle at the 2019 Moonshine Cruiz-In. Photo by Todd Forrest

Club 66...

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they took an oath to protect. Their cremated remains lie unclaimed on the shelves of American funeral homes everywhere.

It is the vision of MIAP "to provide honor and respect to those who have served this country by securing a final resting place for these forgotten heroes."

And it is the mission and vision of Club 66 to honor all American veterans, living or deceased, in any way they can, and to encourage American civilians to do the same.

"We absolutely want to make people aware of the Missing in America Project, not just to donate money to them, but to make a lot more people aware that we have veterans sitting on shelves unclaimed that have not gotten the respect that they deserve in having a military burial," Little said.

Club 66 operates a veterans' thrift store and club, the profits of which go right back into the local community via food, clothes, repair work on homes, clothing donations to a nearby orphanage, fundraisers and Christmas gifts for S.A.F.E. and Shop With A Hero in Hiawassee.

For more information on this fundraiser or to donate to this worthy cause, contact Kathleen Little at katzklaw36@hotmail.com.

Hamilton...

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identified as Stephanie Elaine Hamilton, 40, of Hiawassee, and deputies confirmed that Hamilton was wanted on six warrants before taking her into custody without incident.

All of the warrants were theft-related along with one probation warrant, and they were issued out of Union, Fannin and Rabun counties in Georgia, as well as Oconee County in South Carolina, which is the westernmost county in the Palmetto State.

Veterans...from Page 1A

Betty Phillips are doing a great job with the interviews and recording their stories so that we have them to treasure forever."

Many of Betty Phillips' family members have served in the military, including her late husband, World War II Veteran Dr. Richard Schmidtke, who worked on the Manhattan Project.

"There would be no way that words could express the sacrifices that the veterans have made for our freedom and rights that so many of us take for granted," Phillips said. "We have a number of veterans here in our community. That's why our group is striving to get out there and find them, make them feel wonderful, and let them know that they are appreciated."

"There is no need for them to stay home; we as a community need to reach out and make them feel loved."

Before the veterans received their free lunches, each retired service member stood up, and with microphone in hand, stated their branch of service, where they served and for how long.

Several veterans also went on to tell short stories from their time in the military, including some of their most memorable war stories.

The Alpha Delta Kappa Teacher Sorority, Friendship Youth Group, and David and Myrtle Sokol handed out sack lunches and drinks to each veteran in attendance, and youth group members presented certificates of appreciation to the veterans that day.

Also during the event, the Historical Society displayed a special PowerPoint presentation showcasing pictures, interviews and letters from many of the local veterans.

"This means a lot to all of us veterans, and our community really makes us feel



Betty Phillips of the Towns County Time Capsules historical project in the July 13 Heritage Day. Photo by Chad Stack



Iwo Jima Veteran Bud Johnson at the Historical Society's annual Heritage Day event over the weekend. Photo by Chad Stack

appreciated," veteran Danny Barrett said. "I'm very thankful to know that the community I call home is a community that takes care of our veterans."

Towns County student Summer Rahn performed "The Star-Spangled Banner,"

Eastgate Life Academy student Gabriel Moody led the Pledge of Allegiance, and Iwo Jima Veteran Clarence "Bud" Johnson offered a prayer at the event.