

Jom Session brings live music back to Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds

By Jarrett Whitener
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HIWASSEE – Campers Jon Duquette and Tom Edmonds, collectively known as Jom Session, performed a free concert for guests inside Anderson Music Hall at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds on Saturday, Aug. 22.

The idea came into being after Fairgrounds General Manager Hilda Thomason watched a small performance that the group put on for fellow campers the previous weekend.

“I was out in the campground, and they came over and said they were having a free concert,” Thomason said. “I went over there and listened to them play for about two hours, and it was really good music.”

“Then they said they would like to do something on the grounds, and I asked them to come to the Music Hall and perform a free concert for the public.”

Of course, the idea of hosting live entertainment inside the Music Hall again appealed to Thomason, who has not been able to have too many people at the fairgrounds this year due to COVID-19.

Fortunately, The Hall was able to accommodate everyone safely and allow for added ventilation inside the venue by having its many exterior doors around the building raised.

“I think it is great, and they have great talent,” Thomason said of the performance. “A lot of campgrounds have little shows and music on the weekends. We (usually) entertain in a big way with the Music Hall, with big concerts; people are missing that, and I am missing it.”

“With COVID-19, we just can’t have those concerts, because we can’t social distance enough. With this, the music hall holds 2,900 people, and this won’t bring in all those people, so we can social distance properly.”

Duquette and Edmonds hail from Stuart, Florida, and their band Jom Session performs a variety of music.

“We have been coming here for about eight years,” Duquette said of the GMF campgrounds. “The area is beautiful; the lake is great. We got involved and worked concessions, and we love it here.”

“Tom and I have been playing for 15 years – we

were in bands as kids. We have been playing the country club circuit and bars, which is just enough for us because we are older now. We do it because we enjoy it.”

“We play classic rock ‘n’ roll, anything from Elvis to country and western with the Zac Brown Band. I’ve always wondered what it would be like to perform on this stage, and I am happy to find out.”

Attendees really dug the concert at the Music Hall, including Mark Plunkett of Kentucky, who got a kick out of seeing live entertainment again since COVID-19 has caused so many public event cancellations.

“I think they were great,” Plunkett said. “For a free show, you can’t complain about much. It is nice of them to perform here for us and to share their music. I think they interact with the crowd enough to keep it entertaining. They may not be big stars, but they are talented, and I enjoyed watching them.”

“It is a fun event and something that I am glad to be part of since we haven’t really been able to have concerts recently.”

The Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds hosts community



Jom Session performed a free concert for a small crowd at the Anderson Music Hall Saturday. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

events throughout the year, so check out GeorgiaMountainFairgrounds.com for more information on upcoming activities, including potential COVID-19 updates.

School First Week...from Page 1A

Kids are responding so well to the changes, and they are wearing masks when we ask them to. Social distancing and the one-way halls are working great. We couldn’t ask anything better than how our kids are responding.

“What I am hearing from them is that they would rather be here than at home. They would rather be sitting in school and doing this than sitting at home and doing it online. We are pleased with students, people’s children, that are coming in and doing the right thing.”

“It has been one of the smoother openings I have ever had, honestly. I just can’t say enough about how well this has gone.”

Students such as

freshman Eli Phillips were happy to be back experiencing some semblance of educational normalcy for the first time since mid-March.

“It was a good week of school – a good first week – and we learned a lot,” Phillips said. “It was good to see my friends back. Everybody up there is doing well with the masks.”

Senior Vanessa Floyd said she was looking forward to a smooth year so that seniors especially don’t have to forgo all the activities the Class of 2020 did.

“It has been a lot different, but honestly, I am just grateful to be back,” Floyd said. “I get to see my friends and teachers. In-person classes are so much better. I really hope we are able

to have all the sports seasons this year so people don’t miss out on their last season.

“Also, I hope we can have a normal graduation, prom and other things. I think the teachers and administration are setting out the rules and guidelines and following them and making it easy for the students to follow.”

Students and educators alike are optimistic that on-campus instruction will keep progressing with the appropriate guidelines in place to ensure everyone stays safe and happy for the 2020-21 school year.

For more information on Towns County Schools, visit Towns.k12.ga.us.



Attendees of the free Jom Session concert on Aug. 22 made sure to socially distance inside the Music Hall. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

Dating Show...from Page 1A

Additionally, Spangler said the production will be following all appropriate COVID-19 safety protocols, which is one of the reasons “we’re staying exclusively on the resort.”

Production crews began arriving last week, with a project timeline that will “take place over the next couple of months,” Spangler said.

News of the production is certain to be welcome in the wider community, as it will bring much-needed investment into the area, create an unspecified number of local jobs, and give people something non-COVID-19 related to talk about.

“There’s a variety of jobs that are being added where we can tap into local resources and expertise,” Spangler confirmed.

As to how the production landed in Towns County, Spangler said there was “an extensive scouting for a location that met our needs, one of which was a beautiful backdrop and a great community.”

“So, The Ridges seemed to be the perfect choice,” Spangler said, adding that the show had completely booked

the resort for the duration of filming.

According to the company’s website, Lighthearted has produced several dating shows for MTV, VH1 and other networks.

Georgia has a rich history in film – from “Deliverance” shot right next door in Rabun County in 1972, to parts of “Trouble With the Curve” recorded at Young Harris College in 2012, much of this history can be found at <https://www.exploregeorgia.org/filmography>.

Indeed, the Georgia Department of Economic Development says that Georgia “is now a leading destination in the world for filming,” thanks to its “temperate climate, great variety of locations, the world’s busiest airport, large crew base and pro-business focus.”

“For over 40 years, the Georgia Film Office has been engaged in bringing film and television production to Georgia,” per georgia.org. “There’s a reason why the entertainment industry in Georgia is attracting a record number of productions.”

“In Georgia, you’ll find

one of the most competitive tax incentive programs in the country, along with a broad network of production and recording facilities, a large and skilled workforce including actors, the latest production equipment and suppliers, gaming and interactive media developers, and technology and support services.

“With Georgia’s vast production infrastructure, there is little you will need to bring in for your next production, saving you time and further expense.”

Pertaining to COVID-19, which has hit the film industry particularly hard, the state advises individuals “to take personal responsibility as well as an active role in maintaining a clean and healthy set.”

“As we are in the midst of navigating the response and recovery phase of the coronavirus pandemic, The Georgia Film Office encourages film and television companies to develop strategies to support the health and safety of their cast and crew as production activity restarts,” per georgia.org.

Corona Concerns...from Page 1A

continue following all COVID-19 best practices as advised by health officials, but perceptions of the virus don’t seem to have changed much in recent weeks, even with the downward trends.

“In March, they promised that it would go away in a few weeks or months,” said resident Malinda Kerr while shopping at the Dollar Tree on Friday. “We are almost six months in, and still no solution or even a hint of a solution.”

“It blows my mind that the entire world can band together to find a cure or solution to this, and nobody has found it. I’m not one for conspiracies and all that junk, but I feel like this is being put off. I’m not saying

Bagpipe instruction

The Appalachian Saint Andrew’s Pipes and Drums Bagpipe Band is offering free instruction to all who want to learn how to play the Great Highland Bagpipe or to learn Regimental Drumming.

The band meets each Saturday from 9:30 a.m. until 12 noon in the Parish Hall of St. Clare’s Episcopal Church for instruction and practice.

For further information, call 770-833-5411 or 1-828-557-3812. NT(Aug26,21)CA

that it is purposefully being ignored, but people just are not making it a priority.

“We want to protest and have large gatherings, which spread the virus. Then, we want to have gatherings to protest gathering, and it doesn’t help.”

David Washington of Warne, North Carolina, has concerns about the growing divide between many Americans, which he feels is being exacerbated by political tensions in a pandemic.

“America is more divided now than it has ever been before,” Washington said on a trip to the Dollar General Saturday. “Everything you think or say puts you on a side, and everybody wants to take sides.”

“I know that elections and politics get two-sided, but this is just unbelievable. I can’t even disagree without offending someone anymore. I don’t know where it went wrong, but opinions are taking everything over, and if you don’t have the right one, then you are shamed and humiliated for it.”

“People should be whatever they want to be and think how they like, but to think less of someone else because they are different from you is a joke. News flash for those people: everyone is different.

If we were all the same, we aren’t even human beings anymore.”

Andy Petty of Florida believes that mainstream media sources and social media platforms are largely driving the division between people, and that the American people are being manipulated for profit.

“The media has led to the state of the country being the way it is,” Petty said at Hiwassee Fruit & Vegetable Stand Saturday. “Those big news stations are telling people what they want to hear and making people worry. They can’t keep their stories straight, and it makes me sick.”

“I don’t understand how you can legally present yourself as news and then lie or tell cut stories to people that trust you. People are so into these channels that they won’t give them up, and they believe every single word that comes out of their mouths.”

“I would just tell people to do a little of their own research and not listen to these networks like they are. They only exist for money, and they want people to take their side. It isn’t about information; it is about dividing people for money.”

County Meeting...from Page 1A

can reimburse ourselves. We have to sign a resolution to do that.”

Bradshaw also signed an annual agreement between the county, the Sheriff’s Office and the School District to provide for the two school resource officers to monitor activity on school campus.

“The school pays 75 percent of the salary, and the

county pays the other 25 percent (out of the Sheriff’s Office budget), so every year we have to enter into an agreement stating just that,” Bradshaw said.

During the public comments portion of the meeting, local woman-about-town Joan Crothers asked after the progress on Shakerag Road leading up to Bell Mountain

Park, and Bradshaw said safety recommendations had come in and that he’d be reaching out to the homeowners there in short order.

Towns County Commission Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month at 5:30 p.m. inside the courthouse, and everyone is invited to attend.

Runoff...from Page 1A

outcome.

Should the already certified results for Towns County Sheriff stand, Henderson will appear unopposed on the Nov. 3 General Election Ballot, making him the sheriff-elect ahead of swearing in January 2021.

For the office of District 50 State Senator, the Secretary of State’s Office should be announcing this week a recount date for the race between Republicans Stacy Hall and Bo Hatchett. At press time, Hatchett led by 37 votes, or about 0.14 percent, in an election featuring 24,947 ballots cast.

Oliva said the Secretary of State’s Office informed her last week that it should get ready for a District 50 recount even though an official date had

yet to be announced.

“There’s a lot of work to prepare for that,” Oliva said, noting all ballots must be physically scanned again. “I have to empty the bins where the ballots are stored and prepare them to be run through our scanning device.”

On the Democratic ticket, Dee Daley ran unopposed for 50th District State Senator in the General Primary, meaning Daley and the Republican nominee – whoever it may be – will go head to head for the seat on Nov. 3.

Since this was a primary runoff, voters had to choose a political party ballot to vote, but there will be just one ballot for the upcoming General Election in November.

Early in-person voting

for the November election will take place at the Towns County Board of Elections Office during the three weeks prior to Election Day, which is Tuesday, Nov. 3, from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Registered voters who will be at least 18 years of age by Election Day are eligible to vote during early voting, with Oct. 5 being the registration deadline for voters looking to participate in the Nov. 3 election.

On Election Day, voters should report to one of the three pre-assigned Towns County voting precincts: Hiwassee at the Civic Center; Young Harris at the Lodge Hall Building, aka Stephens Lodge; and Macedonia at Macedonia Baptist Church.

Cherokee Cures...from Page 1A



The “Cherokee Cures” lecture by Mark Warren was well attended at the Civic Center on Friday. Photo by Jarrett Whitener

area. For more information on the classes, visit MedicineBow.net.

“Medicine Bow is a 35-acre wilderness school tucked into the Chattahoochee National Forest in the mountains of north Georgia near Dahlonega,” according to the site. “The owner

and teacher, Mark Warren, guides his students toward their own unique relationship with nature through the Earthlore accumulated by the Native Americans.

“Through the classes of Medicine Bow, nature takes on new values as the source of

food, medicine, craft materials, fire, tools, shelter and primitive weaponry. Learning through the patient methods of the American Indians, students encounter a vast academic growth as well as a spiritual one.”