

Rodeo...from Page 1A

to watch the events.

"This year's rodeo has been very successful," said Art Miller, Union County Saddle Club Rodeo Chairman. "We had one of the biggest Friday night crowds that we've ever had. I could even go as far to say that this is one of the biggest Saturday night crowds as well. It was excellent."

Hosted by the Union County Saddle Club and presented by Circle N Rodeo Company and presenting sponsor Mountain Valley Motors, the two-night affair featured plenty of major cowgirl and cowboy events, with several other games for the audience to participate in as well.

"This is an IPRA (International Professional Rodeo Association) rodeo," said Ray Norton, Circle N Rodeo Production Agent. "IPRA is the second largest rodeo association there is. This rodeo falls into the circuit. Every cowboy and cowgirl here tonight is competing to go to the finals in Oklahoma City in January."

"They have to be in the top 15 in the world, not just the United States but the world, to get to go to Oklahoma City. IPRA isn't only in the United States, it's in a bunch of other countries, including Canada, which is becoming quite the scene for rodeo."

Cowboys and cowgirls from all across the country competed in bronc riding, barrel racing, calf roping, team roping, steer wrestling, ladies breakaway roping and the crowd favorite, bull riding, last weekend, all in hopes of making it one step closer to the finals.

In between the main events, the audience participated in blindfolded wheelbarrow racing, calf scrambles, horseshoe tosses and more for cash prizes, emceed by the family-friendly comedic act of rodeo clown Josh "Porkchop" Garrick.

Coming all the way from Arkansas, last weekend was not Garrick's first rodeo as he comes from a long line of rodeo folk. His family has been in the rodeo business for longer than Garrick can remember, making his decision to become a rodeo clown a simple one.

"I come from a rodeo

family," said Garrick. "I attended my first rodeo when I was 2 weeks old. Everybody in my family has been involved in the rodeo at one point or another, not to the point that I have though. I've been with the rodeo for 19 years now and I'm 35 years old and it's been awesome."

"I get to travel all over the country and into Canada. I love getting to meet new people from all across the United States. I have friends in all 50 states and providences in Canada. "This is an amazing group of people. We spend so much time together that these people have become my family."

While Garrick travels around the country and into Canada for rodeos, he said that one of his favorite places to visit would always be Georgia, particularly Blairsville, because of the welcoming community and homegrown Southern hospitality.

"I was last in Blairsville about five or six years ago," said Garrick. "One thing that sets Blairsville apart is the people. Everybody here is so, so nice. They're so accommodating and they just open the town to us. You find southern hospitality at its finest when you come to Blairsville. This is an awesome community."

Along with the rodeo activities and main events, each night of the rodeo held a special theme to honor various groups and organizations. On Friday night, everyone in the arena stood and paid tribute to the brave men and women who fight for this nation's freedom and liberties. Saturday night held a special honor as well, as many wore pink to support research for breast cancer.

"Tomorrow (Saturday) night is 'Tough Enough to Wear Pink,'" said Norton. "We do this to raise breast cancer awareness and to show our support. We like to do that every year. "Tonight (Friday) is military night. We honor anyone who is or who has been in the military at any time. This is to pay our respects for everything that these people do for us as citizens, because they do so much."

The two-day rodeo could not have been possible



Local kids taking part in the Hay Scramble event. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

without the support of many local sponsors who, each and every year, make the rodeo dream into a reality.

Along with main sponsor Mountain Valley Motors, this year's premiere sponsors were: General Supply, Inc.; American Cowboy Store; Nelson Tractor; McClure Truck and Trailer Sales, Inc.; Total Recovery; Zaxby's; Alexander's Store; Chick-fil-A; Blue Ridge Mountain EMC and Union General Hospital.

Additional sponsors included: Home Depot; Jim's Smokin Q; Michelle Vaughn, PC; Mike's Seafood; Rick's Rental; United Community Bank; Ingles; Head, Westgate Corp.; Circle K; Lance Law; K Creek Farms; Colwell Construction; O'Reilly's Auto Parts; Monte Alban of Blairsville; Union County FFA; North Georgia News & West Printing; Elliott Brothers Mechanical, Inc.; Folger Gas; State Farm Insurance; Jerry Henderson; Bill Potts Insurance and Motor Sports.

"We're going to take a few months to rest, but then we're going to get planning for next year," said Miller. "We're going to make it bigger and better next year. That's always the plan."



Barrel racing at the 2017 Blairsville Pro Rodeo. Photo/Lily Avery



2017 Miss Rodeo USA Brittany Howard. Photo/Lowell Nicholson



Mickey Cummings & Kristy Peney

Meet Me at the Market

Jennifer and Rusty Logan own and operate Whimsy Flower Farm on Nicholson Road in Union County. They grow more than 50 varieties of flowers including Zinnias, Dahlias, Cosmos and Sunflowers. Driving up to the gardens the first thing you notice is the fencing which keeps away the deer. Next you notice row after row of beautiful flowers. Jennifer's favorites are the Zinnias and Dahlias while her daughter, Miriam, prefers the Cosmos.

The couple met as youngsters while working at a Christian Camp in Colorado. Rusty worked as a guide leading campers on backpacking and hiking trips in the Rocky Mountains while Jennifer cooked and ran the camp where kids from all across the country lodged during their camping experience. Their romance began when Jennifer made Rusty some brownies and then hiked up a drainage to the trail and campsite where a group was camping. The place was located at 12,000 feet on top of a mountain.

Rusty recently retired from guiding for this camp after more than 20 years of service. The family has been selling flowers for 4 years and continue to enjoy every minute of raising and then marketing their flower crops. The couple has 4 children in Ethan, Eli, Samuel, and Miriam.

If you would like to purchase their flowers you can find them in Building B, stalls

49 and 51.

Big Branch Farms is located close to Richard Russell Road in the Craig Gap area of Union County. They produce a variety of different vegetables organically. These vegetables include: sweet corn, melons, tomatoes, greens, cucurbits, okra, eggplant, pepper, artichoke, carrots and sweet potatoes. Alex and Sarah Cookfair are the owners and operators of the farm. Their little boy, Ben, is rather fond of tractors and he seems to love meeting people. Alex is from Georgia and is a proud alumnus of the University of Georgia where he majored in Business. After graduation he moved to Colorado where he met Sarah in 2008. Sarah hails from New Jersey. She attended school at Harvard where she majored in Biology. I asked them how they ended up in Georgia. Alex smiled and told me they worked seasonally in Colorado for various vegetable growers. They enjoyed growing things and eventually Sarah's family farm in New Jersey became available for them to lease. So, the couple began operations in New Jersey. After a period of time they wanted their own place and eventually chose Union County, GA.

The couple is innovative in their approach to not only growing vegetables, but the marketing of them as well. For instance, they grow most of their melons on beds covered in plastic which allows them to harvest their melons about

2 weeks earlier than conventional methods of production. Also, they use drip irrigation as opposed to overhead irrigation which reduces the incidence of plant disease on their vegetables. But, also they market much of their crop to CSAs and restaurants. You can meet Alex, Sarah and Ben in Building B, Stall 60 at the Farmers Market.

Saturday, June 24th, is the American Cancer Society's Dessert Contest at the Farmers Market. This is one of my favorite days at the Market. Many of you know that I have a sweet tooth and truly enjoy tasting any kind of dessert. If you wish to participate in this dessert contest please bring your dessert to the Farmers Market Canning Plant Office no later than 9:30 a.m. All the desserts will be judged beginning at that time. Winners will be announced at 11 a.m. We will have the following categories: cakes, pies, cookies, and others. First place winners in these categories will receive a Farmers Market T-shirt.

So, for a fun-filled day "Come Out and Meet Us At the Market"

Cruise-In at The Sweet Spot Co.

Whether you own a classic car and enjoy showing it off or just enjoy looking at beautiful classic cars, this event is for you. Join us at The Sweet Spot Co. on June 25th from 2-5 p.m. for a cruise-in. The Sweet Spot Co. is located on Hwy. 129 approximately 1.25 miles north of the Hwy 129/515 intersection. Admission is free.

For more information contact Laura or Hal at The Sweet Spot Co. at 706-804-4423.