

Skynyrd...continued from Page 1A

commodate the people with the food, because we can't handle it all in the Music Hall.

"We'll have plenty of food, we're going to cook a bunch of hamburgers and hot dogs on a big grill - I've got a bunch of volunteers that are coming in to help me. And we're going to open up the Snack Shack and the Catfish Booth and sell food out of those two booths, along with the concession stand in the Music Hall and the Ice Cream Booth."

It has been less than two weeks since ticket sales opened up online and Thomason said they have already sold more than 2,000 - needless to say, tickets are going fast and early for the show that's nearly two months away.

"It's been very busy," said Thomason. "About all we've gotten done here in the office is answering the telephones and helping the customers, which I'm not complaining, that's a great problem to have."

"I'm thankful that they're all wanting to come to Towns County and the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds and

spend their money here in the county."

First-time Georgia Mountain Fairgoers Lynyrd Skynyrd will be the biggest act ever to grace Anderson Music Hall, and with customers already having called in from as far away as Colorado and Michigan, Thomason knows this concert will be something special.

"I think it's wonderful that we're able to get Lynyrd Skynyrd," said Thomason. "With the building only seating 2,900, something we've never been able to do is get the bigger acts, so yes, I'm thankful that we can do this, and hopefully we'll get some more."

Other good news from the fairgrounds includes recent confirmation of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, which will be playing Anderson Music Hall on Oct. 1. Lynyrd Skynyrd will celebrate 50 years together this year, having formed in 1966, so Thomason is certainly looking forward to that show.

Other big talent coming up will be the Travis Tritt concert on May 14, which is the same weekend as the Georgia

Mountain EggFest.

"And also we've got the Lake Lanier Cornhole Tournament that same weekend - we've got 24 teams registered for the cornhole tournament," said Thomason. "We've sold about 1,400 tickets so far on Travis Tritt, and we figure we'll have probably 1,800 or 1,900 by the time it rolls around."

Plus, Chubby Checker will be playing alongside The Tams and The Drifters on May 28, which is Memorial Day Weekend.

Coming up in July is the huge annual event known as the Georgia Mountain Fair, running July 15 through July 23.

"We're looking for volunteers for the Georgia Mountain Fair and the Fall Festival, so if anybody wants to volunteer, please contact the Georgia Mountain Fair," said Thomason. "We've got booths that we need help with, and all kinds of jobs."

"And be sure to come visit the Hamilton Rhododendron Garden. It's absolutely beautiful - it's blooming, and it's really getting pretty."

Festival...continued from Page 1A

"Included in the festivities will be clan gatherings, pipes and drums bands, the Parade of Tartans, highland animals, music workshops, professional and amateur athletic competitions, and so much more. The games promote cooperation and goodwill between the Scottish clans and those in the United States.

"Thousands of people, Scots and non-Scots alike, from throughout the United States are expected to attend this wonderful event. Such celebration of the cultural diversity of the people of Georgia is to be welcomed and encouraged by all Georgians."

Beyond the local proclamation, the Southeast Tourism Society honored the festival and highland games as being one of the "Top 20 Events in the Southeast," an award it has seen fit to bestow on the festival for 10 years in a row.

This is a big deal because the Southeast Tourism Society takes into account festivals and special events in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

"This event brings a lot of tourism to the area, from all around the Southeast, not just out of Georgia," said Mayor

Conley, who is a big fan of the Scottish Festival. "We have 12 states represented that we have people coming here during this event to participate or either as tourism.

"Tourism is the big draw that brings the money from this event to the merchants in town, the housing, all the hotels and motels, cabins, and of course, for the event itself. The event is pretty much self-supporting."

For Allison, she's excited to be celebrating yet another year of the Scottish Festival and Highland Games in Union County, especially in light of the continued status as Top 20 Event for the Southeast.

"We're thrilled to be receiving this award again," said Allison, who has taken her family to the festival every year since its beginning. "The Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games Committee has done a fantastic job year after year, and their hard work and dedication is showing through in this award. Everything that they do, months and months of planning goes into it, and it makes it a very successful and highly attended event."

"You can tell when the games are in town, the amount of traffic and the tourists that come. They stay in our hotels, they go to the grocery store -

you see them everywhere, and it's wonderful to see so many people coming in to visit from so many areas. I know that people have come from Scotland before for the games, and we're having some visitors from Canada this year."

The Scottish Festival may take place in Meeks Park, but the economic advantages of the event that attracts thousands of guests each year spirals outward into the surrounding counties, all of which benefit from increased hotel/motel bookings thanks to the festival and games.

Beginning at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, June 10, the night before the opening of the Scottish Festival and Highland Games at Meeks Park, area residents will be treated to several free performances at the Historic Union County Courthouse, featuring the Appalachian St. Andrews Pipe and Drums, Scottish Troubadour Colin Grant-Adams and Scottish comedian Bob Valentine.

The very next day, on Saturday, June 11, games begin at 8 a.m. and all activities open by 9 a.m., with the official Opening Ceremony commencing at noon.

For more information ahead of the event, visit the Blairsville Scottish Festival & Highland Games Facebook page.

Patriots...continued from Page 1A



members dressed in contemporary American costume fired blank rounds from their 1776-era long guns to memorialize the "Shot Heard Round the World," which occurred at the battle of Lexington and Concord, the first battle of the American Revolution.

"Patriots Day was the day after Paul Revere made his ride, and the soldiers and militia met on the grounds at Lexington and they confronted the British," said Chapter President Sid Turner. "And that was what's known as the first shot heard around the world."

"But I kind of like to say it a different way, which makes it a little more poignant - it's the first time anybody ever died for our freedom," he added.

The Blue Ridge Chapter SAR encompasses Union, Towns, Fannin and Gilmer counties. According to Turner, the chapter has about 30 members. Four of them stood out in front of the courthouse on Tuesday, dressed in historically accurate clothing.

"What they're wearing

is militia outfits," Turner said, gesturing to his companions. Turner himself was dressed in a hunter's frock coat.

"They didn't set the year standard until 1779, so in the early war, they would wear what they had, and a lot of them didn't have enough, so George Washington ordered about 5,000 of these hunter's frock coats to be made to clothe his army in. It was reasonably cheap, it would keep the soldiers warm, and it also made all his soldiers look like crack riflemen," he said.

In those days, professional hunters shot rifled guns instead of the less accurate smoothbore guns. The hunters themselves were also excellent shots because of the time spent hunting.

"It was a psychological effect on the British soldiers," Turner explained.

When not commemorating Patriot's Day, the Sons focus on promoting education and preserving history.

"One thing that I really like doing is decorating the graves of the actual Revolutionary War soldiers," said Turner. "We've done some in

Union County and we've done some in Towns County, and in Fannin County and Gilmer County, and we place flags on their graves every Memorial Day."

The Sons are working on getting permission to dedicate another grave to a soldier, Captain James Kell.

"If we get the family permission we'll go ahead with that," said Turner. "We also give talks in schools. I gave a talk in Blue Ridge yesterday."

The Sons of the American Revolution also participate in the nationwide Americanism poster contest, designed to promote interest in American history. In the past, the Blue Ridge chapter has done very well in the poster contest, and Turner is optimistic about their chances this year.

"Our poster is going to the state now to be graded. If it gets past state it will be put in nationals, and the last two years, posters that won in our local chapter won first place in the state, and last year they went on and won second place in nationals," he said.