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a run for their money.

The sorghum sopping begins at 1 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday of the opening weekend.

Other games also traditionally held on Saturday and Sunday will now only be held on Sunday, Bridges said.

Those other games include the Pole Climbin' Contest, the Log Sawin' event, the Rock Throw, and Baccur Spittin' Contest.

Pole Climbin' is open to all ages who wish to attempt to climb their way to the top of a fresh cut poplar. The person to climb the highest and the fastest claims the victory.

The Log Sawin' event also is open to all comers who want to try and be the fastest team to saw a huge log in two pieces. The log is chained down.

The Rock Throw is for all ages to determine who can heave the rock the farthest. The size of the rock varies and de-



Scenes like this are a major indicator that it's Sorghum time.

pends on the size of the person tossing the rock.

The Baccur Spittin' event is for individuals 18 or older who choose to bite off a big wad of chewing tobacco, work up a spit, and see if they can spit the farthest from with the worked up chaw.

Other family entertainment includes a friendly game of horseshoes.

Anyone who is up for a friendly game of horseshoes, well, they'll find a game at the

Sorghum Festival.

Of course there's also music a plenty, Gospel, Country Music and Bluegrass.

The music is flowing Saturday and Sunday, as well as Oct. 19th and 20th.

John Nix and the Country Cousins will perform at the Square Dance on Saturday and Oct. 19th.

The Union County Fast-Pitch Softball Team will collect admission fees at the Old Middle School Gym both nights.

The fun begins at 8 p.m. on Saturday and Oct. 19th.

On Saturday, headlining entertainers include Don Byers, BlueBilly Grit, David Riddle, Leather N' Lace, Blairsville School of Dance, Georgia Highlanders, and The Dead Fields.

On Sunday, headlining entertainers include The Mike Watson Band, Thomas Family, and John Nix and The Country Cousins.

On Oct. 19th, headlining entertainers include Waymore's Outlaws, Steven Phillips & Midnight Express, Remnant, John Nix and The Country Cousins, and Sweetheart, Sweet Tart, and the Tiny Tart Cloggers.

On Oct. 20th, headlining entertainers include John Nix and The Country Cousins, Flatline, Curtis Blackwell and The Dixie Bluegrass Boys, and Georgia Highlanders.

Other entertainment includes Hazzard Life, Carolina Moonshiners (second weekend only) and Atlanta Puppet. The festival runs the weekends of Oct. 12th and Oct. 19th.

Inside today's edition is a pull out section for the 44th Annual Blairsville Sorghum Festival.

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through the Union County countryside, the runners met back at the Suches Community Center. After the grueling race, the weary runners didn't have to look far for a place to relax and enjoy the rest of their weekend.

Directly across the street, the festival was opening its gates and a sea of locals and visitors flooded the field behind Woody Gap School. And as the sun went down over the Valley Above the Clouds, folks put their dancing shoes on and headed out to the Square Dance, which has become quite a tradition during Indian Summer Fest.

"It's like a family reunion," said Jerry Wood, one of the founders of the festival. "A lot of people moved away from Suches to seek employment, but they always come back to the Indian Summer Festival and the Square Dance to reunite with family and old friends."

The festival, which traces its origins back to the late-1970s has grown since its humble beginnings, when a few locals got together, seeking the funds to supply the Falcon basketball team with uniforms. Since then, the festival has taken on a life of its own. Just as the Native Americans relied upon periods of quiet, sunny weather during the fall to complete their harvest to see them through the winter, the students at Woody Gap High School are the beneficiary of every penny generated from the festival to help see them further their education.

"It's become its own entity," said Larry Wood, who along with his brother Jerry, helped get the festival off and running. "It has come a long way since it began across the street. We cleared this field behind the schools and got (then Union County Commissioner) Glen Gooch to send us some concrete to build the stage. Everything we do at this festival raises money for scholarships for the students of Woody Gap."

Plenty of food, arts and crafts, live music, dancing, a turkey shoot, and plenty of mountain culture was there for the taking. Although it's become one of the most popular festivals in North Georgia, the folks in Suches have mostly relied upon word of mouth to spread the news.

State Sen. Steve Gooch (R-Dahlonega) gave the festival quite an endorsement. He proudly admits that he can't recall ever missing an Indian Summer Festival, and loves the small-town flavor that remained constant throughout the history of the event.

"I'm 46 years old and I remember coming here as a young boy, so I guess you could say I've been coming here my whole life," Sen. Gooch said. "What I like about this festival is, you can come here and see people that you've known your whole life. You can experience generations worth of mountain life. The Gold Rush over in Dahlonega has changed over my lifetime. I've seen it transform into more of a commercialized type event, but this event never changes. I remember it today like I remember it 30 years ago."

Located off Highway 60 and just a stone's throw from Highway 180, the festival has become a popular stop for bikers, who venture to the



The annual Cherokee Drama performed by students from The Woody Gap School at the Indian Summer Fest. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

mountains for a weekend ride. Now Tim and Tammy Passow from Buford, who discovered the event by accident, plan on returning for many years to come.

"We were riding through on a motorcycle trip last year, saw the signs, went on in and had a great time," Tim Passow said. "We want to come back next year and will probably make a tradition of stopping here. My sister Kathy is from Minnesota, and we brought her with us this time. I can't wait to go shoot and hopefully I'll win a turkey. I just hope it will fit in

the trunk of the Gold Wing."

The Indian Summer Festival is a fine example of a community rallying together to support its young men and women. Whether you're a native looking to recapture a glimpse of early mountain life or a visitor looking to soak in the local culture, the Indian Summer Festival is sure to please. The festival also is vital to the students at Woody Gap Schools. Although Suches is home to the smallest public school in the state, the community pride and love for their students is gargantuan.