

Sorghum...continued from Page 1A

the festival this year involves the parade route. There was an alteration that saved time, manpower and money, Kim Bridges said.

Parade organizer Vanna Chambers advises that the 48th Annual Sorghum Festival Parade is Saturday, Oct. 14, at 11 a.m., and will feature the original parade route before Georgia 515 became a reality.

Every year, the parade makes its way from the Old Middle School Gym to Cleveland Street, then three quarters of the way around the Blairsville Square and onto Blue Ridge Street.

The difference this year is, instead of hanging a right toward the Blairsville Restaurant and onto Georgia 515, the 2017 Sorghum Festival Parade will go on down to Hunt-Martin Street and make a left, then continue back to Cleveland Street.

Once there, the parade will wind its way up Kimsey Street, then to England Street

on up to where it started at the Old Middle School Gym.

"This will get people back in town," Kim Bridges said. "I think it's going to go over good, and it helps with the traffic situation. Getting it off the four-lane was a big deal. It makes it easier for a lot of people, especially the public safety folks."

The Blairsville Sorghum Festival Parade is always a fun community activity, as residents from Union County and the surrounding areas line the city streets to cheer on the creativity of festival float builders.

This year's parade theme is "We Salute Our Union County Farmers," where float builders are being asked to express their inner farmer and go all out in the name of fun.

Who doesn't want to be a farmer? We all have a little farmer in us that likes to come out now and then. Get your floats ready and bring out the farmer in you and your

organization.

This year's grand marshals will feature Hall of Fame farmers in honor of the theme.

The Hall of Famers include Clyde and I.T. Harkins, Hoyt Hamby, Janie and Ronnie Dyer, and more are expected, according to Festival co-organizer Kim Bridges.

Everyone is encouraged to participate - clubs, churches, businesses, individuals, everyone.

"No application is needed to enter parade," according to the website. "We will be giving cash prizes for First, Second and Third Place float winners. This is a great way for nonprofit organizations, local charities and churches to raise funds.

"Business and personal floats are welcome to participate, and will be given the choice of what local charity or organization they would like to donate prize money to should they be chosen as a winner."

Prize money is for parade floats only, according to the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Club, and prizes are \$300 for First Place, \$200 for Second Place and \$100 for Third Place.

"Floats will be judged on their creativity, amount of work involved, and how well it represents the parade theme," according to the club.

Of course, those interested in joining the parade with a float should comply with the following directions.

"Meeting place for the parade is still at the Old Middle School Gym," according to the club. "Floats must be registered at entry of the ballfield and complete by 9:30 a.m. Judging will begin at 10 a.m."

"We appreciate your continued support of the Blairsville Sorghum Festival. Please help us get the word out in the community about the chance to win prize money for local organizations, churches and charities.

"This is one way we are able to help the community, and at the same time have a great parade for all those dedicated to the tradition of coming out to enjoy the Blairsville Sorghum Festival Parade."

Dreamride...continued from Page 1A

and celebration begins. The more than 3,000-mile ride made a pit stop in Blairsville on Aug. 20, at the Copperhead Lodge where Union County Olympians had the chance to meet and greet with the riders.

But that was not the only time the athletes got to hang out with the riders. During the Dream Ride Experience weekend, the riders arrived in Farmington on Aug. 25, ready to lead the way for the Dream Ride motorcycle rally and ride through 40 miles of beautiful Connecticut countryside.

"Many of us in our group from here have developed a good relationship with these motorcyclists," said Suzanne Taylor, mother of Olympian and Dream Ride participant Ben Taylor. "These people are so great to the kids and when they ride through at the Copperhead Lodge, it's like you're seeing old buddies."

"These people are absolutely amazing and how they interact with the kids is incredible to watch."

Special Olympians from states all over the East Coast, as well as three foreign countries, gathered together to spend a fun-filled weekend of concerts, carnival rides, fishing rodeos, car and motorcycle shows and much more.

"When you walk in the door, they have everything set up and arranged and ready for you," said Taylor. "It's pretty cool and special for everyone there. I get choked up talking about it. It's so cool because the kids can walk through all of it without anything ever being a problem for them and it's that way all weekend long."

"The biggest thing that I try to tell people about this event, no one tells these kids that they can't do something. And they're fully accepted here, just the way they are. It's amazing, as a parent, to watch and experience."

A huge hit for everyone who participated in the Dream Ride Experience was the Dream Cruise, an eight-mile ride in an exotic or classic car for Olympians and their driver companion. The ride featured Lamborghinis,

Ferraris, sipped-up trucks, Volkswagens - just to name a few.

Dream Cruise ended with a red carpet arrival at the Farmington Clubhouse, followed by a catered meal and party for the Olympians and family members.

The fun did not stop there. Olympians fished and swam and even had the opportunity to meet NBA players Tayshaun Prince and Ben Wallace.

And while the three-day event is full of extravagant entertainment and fun, time is set apart each year to award one lucky Olympian and their family with a life changing gift. This year, one lucky young man and his family were gifted with a mechanism that would help him get up and down the stairs in his home, something that was nearly impossible before.

"Every year, the team finds out about a special needs child that has a need for something," said Taylor. "They will go and purchase that item for them. This year, the family lives in a two-story house and their son has muscular dystrophy, along with another disability. He has no coordination and it can be

difficult to get him upstairs and downstairs. And the mother couldn't do it by herself.

"Well, the team gave this family a stair climber device that enables the mother to get him up and down the stairs. And that kind of equipment is life changing.

"That's what this weekend is all about for not just these kids, but their families too. It's a life changing experience and gives them something special, just for them."

After this year's weekend of fun, the Union County Olympians are already gearing up for another year of fundraising and are all counting down the days until next year's Dream Ride Experience.

"This is one of our favorite things to do every year," said Taylor. "I can't wait to see all the fun and surprises that Dream Ride has in store for next year."

Glenda Gooch House available

The Glenda Gooch House is now available for use by families, from the tri-state area, of patients in Union General Hospital as well as local nursing and assisted living homes. For more information please contact Leslie Danie at 706-745-2050, or log on to glendagoochhouse.org.

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