

Sorghum...from Page 1A

the whole day. It's been a real, real good weekend," festival volunteer Donnie Hudson said.

Yet the Sorghum Festival volunteers and countless other vendors continued to churn out canned fruits and vegetables, jams, jellies, and an assortment of canned goods, turning Meeks Park into a cornucopia of Southern and Mountain delicacies.

The Sorghum Mill begins crushing and cooking at 9 a.m. In Blairsville you see, sorghum syrup is king. As is the legendary musicians that call Union County home.

Yes, the festival not only satisfied the taste buds, local Blues/Jazz virtuoso and Georgia Music Hall of Famer Don Byers was on hand to show off his chops as a singer/songwriter and uber-talented guitar picker.

And the term "legendary" wasn't just an arbitrary phrase being thrown around to describe the lineup of musicians at the Festival.

Tommy Townsend and Waymore's Outlaws are on the upcoming weekend card. And if you don't know the story behind Waymore's Outlaw and local musician-turned-entrepreneur Townsend, then the locals won't hold that against you.

"Even I've got my faults," the late Waylon Jennings once sang. "I'm just a man, no more or no less. Bad as the worst, good as the best."

Townsend, Jennings' protege, has taken over for the late-great Jennings, touring with Jennings' former back-up band.

Within the past two years Townsend has kept the



family business going – legally. Granddaddy Mimm's Authentic Georgia Moonshine, Corn Whiskey, and Brandies are based from an old family recipe.

Meanwhile, one can dip their feet into plethora of musical genres from The Mike Watson Blues Band, John Nix and the Country Cousins, and dozens of other local artists who have made the Northeast Georgia mountains as one of the the state's hot-spots for musical talent.

"It's been a wonderful weekend with wonderful weather," said vendor Linda Schuette of My Pop Pop's Nuts. "You meet a lot of nice people from all over. I met a lady who came all the way here from the New York-Canadian Border. This year has been way better so far."

Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley was thrilled at the happenings of the first weekend.

"The 44th Sorghum Festival parade this year was one of the best we have had in several years. I applaud and give thanks to all who organized this historical parade and made it possible," Mayor Conley said. "The Grand Marshal was one of our, Tommy Townsend of Waymore's Outlaws.

"This was a fun-filled parade with a lot young boys and girls participating, antique automobiles, tractors, new lawn and garden toys beautiful floats fitting for the season and also walking scarecrows," he said. "Beautiful horses, mules and a big John Deere tractor pulling a load of sugar cane for syrup making. As usual John Nix and The Country Cousins made the music."

The streets of Blairsville were filled with children and grown ups looking to satisfy their sweet tooth during the annual parade.

"It was a fun day for all of us who took part in this historical event," Mayor Conley said. "I personally want to thank Kim, Angie, Cindy and all who helped to make it possibly."

No Sorghum Festival would be complete without the somewhat notorious contests that locals and visitors subject themselves to.

The Bisket Eatin' Contest will test your digestive tracks – mountain style.

Ask Rodney Moose, and Wesley Baynes, the winners in the syrup sopping, bisket eatin' contest for the first weekend.

The contest was open to anyone more than 16 yards of age. Most competitors were tapping out before reaching 10 biscuits, and most were guys. The girls put their sopping skills to the test as well.

The Pole Climbin' Contest has grown an infamous reputation over the years.

It has yet to be proven if the pole is greased, but the dark cloud of petroleum enhancing drugs still looms.

The Rock Throw is just a test of brute strength, but different sizes are used for different sized competitors to give the underdogs a chance.

The Log Sawin' Contest requires teamwork. As a pair of axemen or axe-women break off into pairs and race against times set by previous amateur lumberjacks.

Finally, the Baccur Spittin' Contest isn't for the faint of stomach. This event is open

for anyone 18 years of age or older, who isn't afraid to bite off a giant chaw of tobacco and send their spittle rocketing through the air.

This event is always a slobber-knocker and is usually decided by the skin of one's teeth.

Like the Indian Summer Festival in Suches the week before, the Sorghum Festival is causing many bikers to reroute their trips through Blairsville in mid-October.

Just ask Vernon and Karen Keef of Hammondville, Ala.

"I was here once a long time ago, so I looked it up online, and when I got here it was like 'oh my gosh!' this has gotten so much bigger," Vernon Keef said.

"We specifically came here on a special trip," Karen Keef said. "We got up at 6 a.m. and jumped on our scooters, and said, 'come on, let's go to Blairsville.'"

Despite some weary locals who aren't fans of the traffic, the economic impact of the festival, continues to line the pockets of Union County business owners and its residents.

"It is unbelievable the amount of people that this festival has drawn," Blairsville-Union County Chamber of Commerce President Cindy Williams said. "I'm just blown away that we're here on a Sunday and the crowd is amazing."

"I love working with these volunteers, they do a fabulous job, they put a lot of work into this festival and we (The Chamber) are proud to be a part of it," Williams said.

