

Valle Country Fair: Having Fun and Giving Back

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Leaves changing to yellows and reds, apples ready for picking, and smoke swirling from chimneys—all signs that fall has come to the High Country. And with fall, seasonal visitors return for their favorite arts and craft fairs, orchard picking sessions, and walks through corn mazes.

The Valle Country Fair, located in historical Valle Crucis, draws over 10,000 visitors who return for Brunswick stew, jams and jellies, and the opportunity to shop from over 160 juried vendors. Children and adults spend time watching traditional apple cider pressings, stirring and bottling of fresh apple butter, and sitting on hay bales listening to Appalachian music groups play on two stages, while munching on a cob of corn or a freshly baked sweet potato.

New demonstrations this year will include sock making on an early 1900s machine and the crafting and playing of handmade flutes. There are several new vendors offering Native American arts, mosaic artwork, and leather neckwear, as well as vendors offering locally grown forest plant essences.

Spirit Ride, Inc. of Banner Elk will bring horses from their therapeutic equine program, with volunteers providing education about the program and the horses. Children's Council of the High Country will offer activities for children. Apple Hill Farm will have alpacas and other animals in their petting zoo.

Visitors to the Valle Country Fair can complete all their holiday shopping, fill their gift baskets with jams and jellies, select baked goods for their freezers, and end their day with eating from one of the many food tents available. Brunswick stew, chili, BBQ, traditional hot dogs and hamburgers, and sausage brats can all be purchased, either to be eaten at the fair or for carry out.

Students from Valle Crucis School will be offering early morning coffee and donuts to help raise funds for their yearly trip to Washington, DC. Students will also be helping in the children's area while a local Boy Scout troop assists with trash pick-up and clean-up.

Sponsored by the Episcopal Church of the Holy Cross in Valle Crucis, in cooperation with the Valle Crucis Conference Center, the Valle Country Fair is in its 39th year. It is successful because volunteers and members of the community support the underlying purpose of the fair. One hundred percent of the net proceeds are returned to the community in grants and assistance to those in need throughout the year. Volunteers for the fair include members of local service organizations and churches, area schools, the community park, and visitors and friends who travel back to Valle Crucis to share their time and talents.

Pamela Conover and Ray Lutz, Valle Country Fair 2017 co-chairs, invite those who wish to help make the fair a success

to find a volunteer slot. Whether parking cars, stirring apple butter, or serving up Brunswick stew, all are needed. "By consolidating our community efforts, we can be more successful in raising funds for those most in need."

Using proceeds from the prior year's fair, the Mission and Outreach committee of Holy Cross provided assistance to over 200 individuals during 2016. Following a submission and selection process, the Valle Country Fair 2017 grant recipients include: WAMY Community Action, Inc., Western Youth Network, Community Care Clinic, Reaching Avery Ministry, Mountain Alliance, Parent to Parent, Spirit Ride, Inc., OASIS, Children's Council, High Country Community Health, and Watauga County Schools Extended Learning Program. Many of the grant recipients will be volunteering at the fair.

Valle Country Fair 2017 will take place October 21, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Valle Crucis, located on 194 South in the field across from the Valle Crucis Conference Center. Fair parking is \$10 per car, \$25 for a large van or small bus, and \$50 for a large bus, with free admission to the activities. No pets are allowed due to health regulations and no smoking is permitted. For further information, directions to the Valle Country Fair, and the list of 2017 entertainers, visit the website at www.vallecountryfair.org.