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end result.

Visitors stood in line to purchase cases, quarts, pints, and souvenir size jars of sorghum syrup to take home.

The event was so successful, the festival actually ran out of sorghum syrup.

"It was a really good crowd," she said. "The lines for the syrup yesterday was astronomical and you can only cook it so fast and people were buying it as fast as we could get it off the pan."

"We're going to try to get into the cane fields one more time just so we can have enough syrup for the local people that want to still buy some," she said. "We were having to take the names of local people who wanted some sorghum so we could get them their sorghum along with the people from out-of-town."

"We've got enough to make more after the festival to fill the demands," Bridges promised.

The Festival has always

featured unique events that have kept visitors coming back year-after-year.

Those events include biscuit-eating contests, pole climbing, log sawing, horseshoe tossing and rock throwing.

A fan favorite has always been the biscuit eating contests where more than 500 onlookers watched contestants gobble up pan after pan of fresh biscuits.

One of the winners ate 11 biscuits sopped and covered with sorghum syrup.

His friends offered to buy him a hamburger and french fries after the contest, but he said he wasn't hungry.

He offered to take his friends up on their generous offer an hour or two later.

Once again there was the legendary Square Dance that attracts visitors from all over the Southeast.

The Mountain Music was as festive as ever and John Nix and the Country Cousins

sounded better than ever.

The live entertainment kept visitors in a festive mood and they came to the Mountains to enjoy themselves.

The Jaycees were more than pleased with the end results in 2012.

"As far as the festival goes, it's been awesome and I haven't heard any complaints," Bridges said. "So everyone has had a good time. I think this year has actually been quite better than some in years past."

The Festival has always served as the largest annual fundraiser for numerous local civic and nonprofit organizations. It was a good year for those folks.

"We've been able to help a lot of different clubs along the way, more than we have in the past while still making a profit," Bridges said. "It has worked out really good this year."

After 43 years, not a whole lot has changed at the

Sorghum Festival.

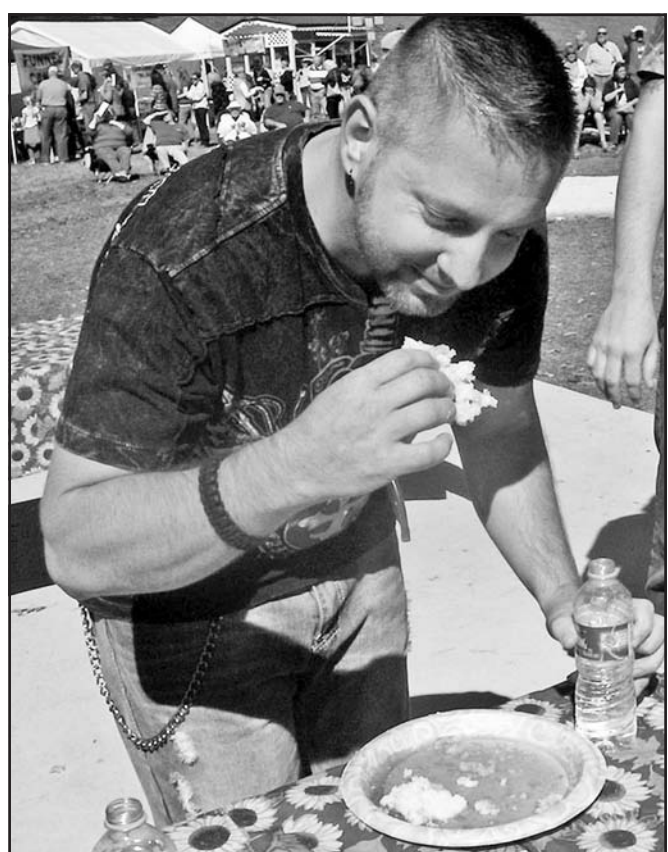
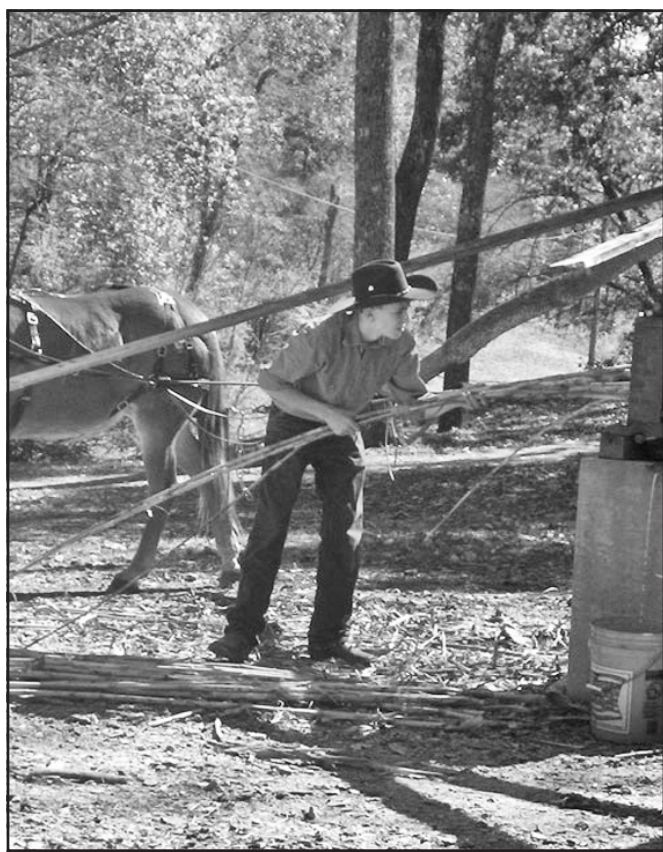
The games, the vendors, the entertainment, and other activities are as fun as ever, although the Blairsville Jaycees have turned part of the Festival over to the Union County Recreation Department so that they can concentrate on making sorghum syrup.

And just when you thought it couldn't get any better, the planning of next year's event already is underway.

"We're already planning for next year," Bridges said. "We're getting the music lined up and we're going to try and do two big concerts next year, like we did with Tommy Townsend this year, but we're going to have one both weekends."

"We're also making plans for some different games next year, so the 2013 Festival is already well in the works," she said.

The 44th Annual Sorghum Festival is now on the clock, Bridges said.



The 43rd Annual Sorghum Festival was a blast. Photos by Janice Boling

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he knew well.

The speed limit was 35 mph and he was traveling just under 80 mph when he decided to pass a white mini-van.

There was a car turning left in front of him that he did not notice when he pulled out to pass.

He collided with the turning car, the impact cut the back of that car off when he hit it and killed two passengers in the vehicle.

Sandy now has to live with the consequences of his actions and that is the focus of his presentation.

He hopes to get the attention of the students and prevent any of them from having to endure the regret he has to deal with every minute of every day.

An Emmy Award-winning documentary based on the events that Sandy endured can be seen at [www.enduringregret.org](http://www.enduringregret.org).

"This was a very powerful presentation and I think it hit home with the students," said Site Administrator Judy Waldroup of MECHS.

The message to students was clear, that you have to live with the choices that you make in life and the results of those choices.

Sandy had the students attention as he laid it all on the line in an effort to get his point across.

"You must be responsible. If you decide to drink and drive then you are being irresponsible and the price could be high if you continue down that path," declared Sandy as

he tried to make his message clear.

All middle and high school students need to hear and see this thought provoking presentation and MECHS was not the only students who got to hear Sandy.

He spoke to Union County and Woody Gap high school students as well on Friday.

Everyone was silent as his influence was felt throughout the assembly halls and he got the students attention.

It's a subject matter that affects many high school students across the country. It was plain to see that Sandy's

message was hitting home with the kids from Union County as well.

MECHS and UCFP would like to thank Commissioner Lamar Paris, who was on hand for the presentation, for the Substance Abuse Prevention grant money that was provided to enable Sandy to come and speak.

The message was clear and aimed right at the hearts of the students.

The awareness that an opportunity like this instills could be life changing for teenagers and might just save their lives or the lives of a family member or friend.