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2024

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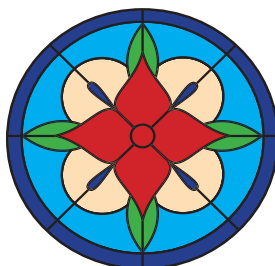
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## THE Stokes News

122 S. Main St., King, NC 27021

General Manager  
**Serena Bowman**  
serena.bowman@  
mtairynews.com

Editor  
**Terri Flagg**  
terri.flagg@  
thestokesnews.com

Multi-Media  
Account Executives

**Bob Ward**  
**Kim Cagle**  
**Samantha Turner**  
**Jason Grimm**  
Layout & Design  
**Darla Allen**

Director of APG Creative Services

**Sandra Hurley**  
shurley@mtairynews.com

**For advertising inquiries,  
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# BREATHE the free air, and WELCOME

**By Terri Flagg**  
terri.flagg@thestokesnews.com

Stokes County is a magical place.

With a nearly complete mountain range at its heart, and one of the very few counties in the nation which can boast that, our geography is unique.

And so are the communities that have blossomed on and around our mountains.

Corner to corner, Stokes

County's 453 square miles offer a rich tapestry of natural and cultural delights.

From any direction, as soon as you cross our county line, the busyness of modern life starts to fade.

That fact is not lost on those who call Stokes County home.

Take this slice of daily life from a town council meeting in Danbury, the county seat.

The council greeted a new planning board member who had moved to Danbury from



File photo

a busy suburb in California, where he said he was just a "blur in everybody's day."

The officials knew

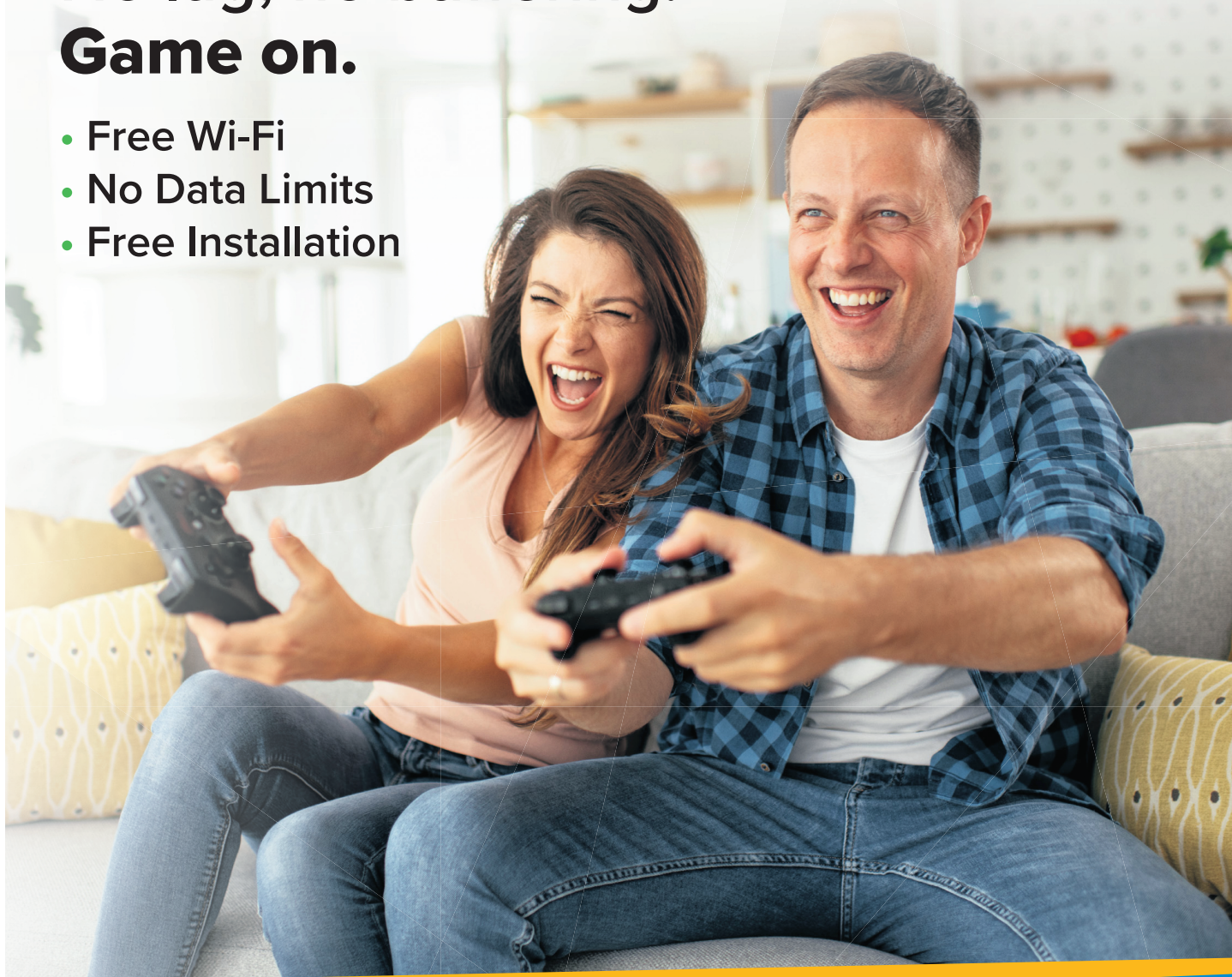
SEE **WELCOME** ON PAGE 21 ►

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# The OLD FASHIONED Way

FOOTHILLS FARM FESTIVAL preserves Stokes County's agricultural heritage

By Terri Flagg

terri.flagg@thestokesnews.com

LAWSONVILLE — The green liquid bubbling in a rectangular, cinder block cauldron gave rise to a steady haze of steam, drawing the attention of many at the 4th Annual Foothills Farm Festival in October 2023.

Evan Robertson slowly stirred the apparent witch's brew with a large wooden utensil while his father, Roy Robertson, explained to a passerby that what is actually sugar cane juice on its way to becoming molasses gets its green color from the cane plant.

After about six hours, the green and other impurities will be boiled away or skimmed off, leaving dark, thick syrup.

Roy, Evan and Roy's wife, Beverly, produce molasses the old-fashioned way on their Lawsonville farm.

"So many people don't understand how it comes

about," said Roy, happy to explain the details to those attending the Oct. 7, 2023 event who seek a fascinating glimpse into the past.

Which is what "A Celebration of Southern Appalachian Heritage," held annually on the Knight family farm on Snow Hill Church Road, is all about.

"The whole purpose that we started the festival was to preserve agricultural heritage and history," Cheryl Knight said of herself and her husband, Robert Knight. "This is a way to preserve those old farming techniques and share them with the public."

The Knights hold the Foothills Farm Festival in honor of Robert Knight's grandfather Robert Lewis Martin.

Robert Knight, who is the 7th generation farmer on the Snow Hill Church Road land, spent a lot of time with Martin and became well versed in the history.



Terri Flagg | The Stokes News

**Waynie Hopkins strings tobacco with Jamie Hicks.**

"....He told me thousands of stories about his youth," Robert Knight wrote in an Oct. 7, 2023 post on Facebook.

"....Our mission is to preserve the history of this region for future generations. But this festival serves another purpose for myself, it is a living memory. Things that I grew up seeing and the stories I heard are the driving factors for many parts of this festival...."

Papa loved going to the folklife festival at Ferrum College. He loved the homemade biscuits, fried chicken and bluegrass music. Papa would tell me stories of working tobacco with mules and logging with mules and horses. Roy loved growing corn and feeding it to his cows as much as anything on the farm. The family would spend a great deal of time every year on the big hill shocking corn, shucking, and filling the cribs...."

The all-day festival —

gates opened at 8 a.m. and culminated at 7 p.m. after a country meal — reflected those memories by including live demonstrations presented in two locations on the farm.

Hayride wagons transported festival goers from the main festival area to field demonstrations: corn picker, combine and tobacco harvesting with horse drawn tobacco sleds and horse logging.

A main area at the festival entrance featured barnyard demonstrations such as corn husking, wool spinning, blacksmithing, chainsaw carving, tobacco tying, saw milling, the making of apple butter, molasses and biscuits.

Old-time and bluegrass musicians performing from a natural amphitheater stage provided an appropriate soundtrack throughout the day.

Food stands, craft vendors, rows of antique tractors and a kids area give the festival a



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**Folks gather around fresh tobacco piled on a sled, gathering bundles for tying at the 4th Annual Foothills Farm Festival in October 2023.**

genuine fair-like feeling.

“Really it’s a community effort,” Cheryl Knight said, noting that several community organizations and team of about 40 volunteers help make the festival happen.

While plenty of folks attended the festival to learn more about a potentially foreign way of life, many who attended were quite familiar with the old techniques — especially those who grew up working tobacco on the family farm.

A pile of fresh tobacco (grown on the Knight farm now for demonstration purposes and a tobacco stringing contest) and the sight of tobacco sticks set against a curing barn drew a crowd of folks swapping memories of working tobacco on the family farm as children, the hard work and many steps involved between planting and selling the final product at market.

Steve Hopper, of Madison, was one of 11 siblings raised his family’s Rockingham County tobacco farm.

He recalled sleeping outside of the tobacco barn with the dog, making sure the fire stayed lit while the dog kept pests away.

“It was just part of our jobs,” he said. “It wasn’t a matter if we liked it or not.”

Hopper said he realized why his heritage was important to



Terri Flagg | The Stokes News

**Students with the Stokes County Arts Council’s Junior Appalachian Musicians program perform at the 4th Annual Foothills Farm Festival in October 2023.**

him while on a tour with his son of the Duke Homestead State Historic Site and Tobacco Museum in Durham.

Out of the group, “I was the only one who had any experience with flu cured tobacco,” he said. “They looked at me like a calf looking at a new gate.”

Hopper was able to fill in a few holes missing from the tour guide’s presentation, such as the annual practice of digging a mud hole for daubing

— filling in holes with mud between logs of the barn.

Sharing that history was helpful, Hopper said.

“It got me off that mourning and talking about my heritage,” he said, something he was happy to continue at his first Foothills Farm Festival in 2022.

“I really enjoyed it. It was a breath of fresh air for me,” he said, as was the 2023 event.

As he chatted with others who shared that heritage,

Hopper fulfilled the intention of the festival as stated by Robert Knight in his social media post:

“As we work to recreate some of the stories I’ve heard and the fond memories I have from growing up in these NC foothills, I hope you’ll come relive some of your old memories or make some new ones of your own.”

SEE MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 8 ►



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**Jessica and Georgia Chambers, of King, stopped by to watch Evan Robertson, right, and his father, Roy, make molasses.**



Terri Flagg | The Stokes News

**A crowd gathers around a biscuit making demonstration led by Abby Hancock and Meagan Lawson, right, at the 4th Annual Farm Festival in October 2023.**



Terri Flagg | The Stokes News  
Waynie Hopkins, left, Curtis White, Jamie Hicks and Steve Hopper talk tobacco at the 4th Annual Foothills Farm Festival in Lawsonville in October 2023.



Terri Flagg | The Stokes News  
Waynie Hopkins instructs Jamie Hicks in the art of the tobacco tie while Curtis White looks on.



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Festival goers watch Roy Robertson skim impurities while making molasses. While many are interested in the process, not everybody loves to eat molasses, Robertson said. "Lots of them turns their nose up," he said.

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# OCTOBERFEST success

## INAUGURAL EVENT draws a crowd

By Terri Flagg

terri.flagg@thestokesnews.com

KING — Local Oktoberfest organizers were hoping for two things on the big day: beautiful weather and people to show up.

Both of those came to pass on Sept. 30, 2023, as people filled two festival sites in downtown King treated by quintessential September sunshine and fresh air.

Attendees had plenty of entertainment options at the inaugural event, with Dalton Road blocked off south of Main Street as well as the StoCo Provision parking lot and open air tap room.

StoCo owners, the City of King and the relatively recently formed King Downtown Partnership sponsored the festivities based on a traditional Bavarian folk festival held annually in Munich.

According to the website [www.Oktoberfest.de](http://www.Oktoberfest.de), the 188th Oktoberfest event ran from Sept. 16 through Oct. 3, 2023.

Owners of StoCo Provision had the idea of having a local Oktoberfest, and one co-owner of the business who also serves on the King Downtown Partnership board suggested the two organizations team up.

The downtown association formed officially in January, said Ashley Mitchell, KDP board vice-president.

As described on pamphlets available at the festival, the non-profit organization is:

“An alliance of merchants, business owners, stakeholders, and community members that are committed to promote the downtown district as a vibrant and attractive place to live, work, play, and do business through economic development, community events and historical preservation.”

Kent Hunter, who is also on the board of the downtown partnership, shared estimates of attendance: from 1800 to 2000 folks came out to enjoy live music, food trucks, games and community.

Downtown business owners provided their own unique



Terri Flagg | The Stokes News

Wrenlee Gallimore paints a pumpkin at a table set up outside Wooden Ladder Art Loft on Dalton Road during Oktoberfest.

forms of entertainment.

Heather Smith, owner of Wooden Ladder Art Loft at 101 East Dalton Road, offered an outdoor pumpkin-painting station.

Participants could, for a few dollars, sit at a shaded, small table on the street and decorate blank pumpkins.

The table was full of busy children by 4:30.

“I think it’s great,” Smith said of the event. “It’s bringing more people out as a community. I love it. It’s nice to see something like this happening.”

Hailey Salamatian has been busy setting up Hailey Bakery, which was in the permitting process.

Oktoberfest provided an opportunity for residents to get a literal taste of her future offerings, as Salamatian set up a table with chocolate chip cookies and small containers of Boston cream pie and banana pudding.

“This is my dream,” Salamatian said of the bakery. “We chose to live in King. We think it’s a beautiful community and I thought why not help build up the downtown.”

She was likewise enthusiastic about

SEE OKTOBERFEST ON PAGE 10 ►

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Cindy and Rob Holby, dressed up in festive garments, are photographed at StoCo Provision's Oktoberfest in 2023.



Terri Flagg | The Stokes News  
Attendees of StoCo Provision's Oktoberfest compete in a stein holding contest.

#### ◀ OKTOBERFEST FROM PAGE 9

Oktoberfest as she stood in the doorway of her future business watching West Stokes High School dance team perform.

"I think it's a great opportunity for everyone to get together and feel the community getting stronger," she said.

Lynette and Randy Ashburn brought their daughter

Eleanor to the festival, which was within walking distance from their home.

"She painted a pumpkin, ate an icee and now she's getting a balloon animal," Lynette said of her daughter. "She's

having a blast.

"I love just being able to support the local businesses and just being a part of King."

The party continued over at StoCo, with lines for beer and fall-themed cocktails



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Oktoberfest attendees fill Dalton Road south of Main Street in King.

streaming out the taproom door.

The West Stokes dance team passed out fund-raising flyers to the crowd, which cheered on as volunteers played local versions of traditional Oktoberfest games such as a keg throwing contest, a stein holding contest and stein relay.

"This is what King needs," said Michael Carnahan, of King, who works with StoCo

as a distributor for Anheuser-Busch Companies, LLC.

Drew Overton and daughter Vera, of Rural Hall, visited both Oktoberfest sites.

Vera held a balloon animal while waiting in line with her dad at StoCo.

Drew, who grew up in King, said it was nice to see social events like Oktoberfest happening in the small town, adding: "You couldn't beat the weather."



File photo  
Boone and Jordan Yates dance to the music of Cooks Wall at the 2023 Oktoberfest.

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A person wearing a dark jacket, a hat, and a backpack stands on a rocky ledge, looking out from a cave opening at a forested mountain landscape. The scene is framed by the rough, textured rock walls of the cave. The text "Our MOUNTAIN is your MOUNTAIN" is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

# Our MOUNTAIN

is your MOUNTAIN

File photo

Hanging Rock State Park continues to flourish.

In 2023, visitors to the park numbered 904,880, making it the ninth most visited state park in North Carolina. The renovation process on the hotel and Vade Mecum property began.

This year, a very special visitor came to the park in January: a trumpeter swan was spotted on Hanging Rock Lake, which was the first time documented in any

North Carolina state park.

Built in the 1930s, Hanging Rock offers sheer cliffs and peaks of bare rock, quiet forests and cascading waterfalls, with views of the Piedmont plateau that stretch for miles.

More than 20 miles of trails are available in the park. In addition to those that lead to Hanging Rock itself, other trails in the park lead to other peaks and rock walls with spectacular

views. Several trails lead to North Carolina's easternmost significant waterfalls down in the valleys.

The park also features 15 miles of mountain bike trails, (all but one labeled as intermediate) two picnic areas and a 12-acre lake with boathouse and swimming area. Rowboats and canoes are for rent during the summer (private boats are not allowed).

The Family Campground

offers a total of 73 sites for tents and trailers. Picnic table, grill, and tent pad are standard at each site. There are no hookups, but water is available. Five group campsites are also available near the park entrance, with picnic tables and a fire circle at each. Pit toilets and water are nearby.

Vacation cabins, accommodating up to six people each, are available as well. Each includes two



File photo

bedrooms, a kitchen and living room. Weekly stays are required during the summer, and there is a two-night minimum during the spring and fall. Pets are not allowed in cabins or the cabin area.

Rock climbing and bouldering are available by permit at Moore's Wall and Cook's Wall. Some cliffs are up to 400 feet high. You must apply for a free permit at the Visitors' Center or at either of the climbing locations.

Park staff was busy in 2023.

According to an annual report presented by Park Superintendent Robin Riddlebarger:

- Staff delivered 433 nature programs and hikes to 4395 people, including a career fair for Stokes County students to learn about possible careers in parks.
- All maintenance staff

SEE **MOUNTAIN** ON PAGE 14 ►



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## Stokes Partnership for Children

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**Time:** 6:00 to 9:00 PM • Doors open at 5:00 PM

**Location:** Nana-Mac Meadows, Pinnacle, NC

Dine in Only, Food served between 6:00 and 8:00 PM



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**Food:** Barbecue and all the fixings, including non-alcoholic drinks and dessert

**Alcohol:** Wine and Beer (not included in the cost of admission)

**Activities:** Live music, live and silent auctions and games.

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are now certified Emergency Medical Responders and have the same training as rangers to attend to emergency calls.

- Park staff joined forces with members of Stokes County EMS, 911 Dispatch, Danbury Volunteer Fire Department, Stokes County Fire Marshal's Office, and King Fire Department for a three-day mock-practice training to become familiar and help all the agencies work harmoniously on calls.

- Staff burned 245 acres under prescription on Flat Shoals Mountain. New burn units have been identified for 2024.

- There were 37 special activity permits issued for a wide range of activities.

- Office Assistant Sandra Patterson was given a Special Achievement Award for assisting the maintenance mechanics from Hanging Rock and Mayo River to achieve their CDL licenses.

#### HANGING ROCK TRAILS



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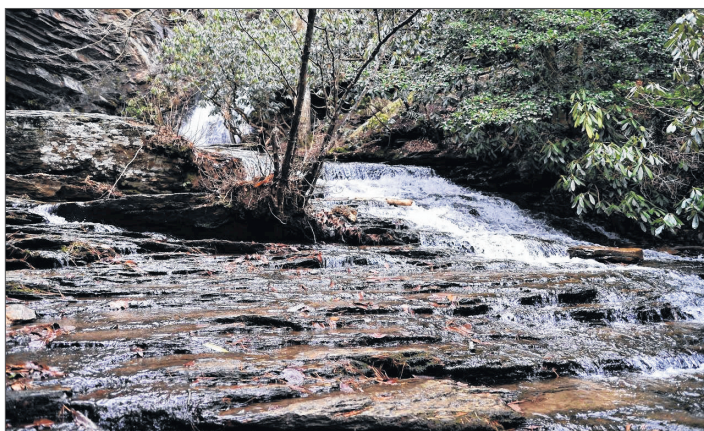




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Hanging Rock Trail 1.3 miles Moderate\*  
 Indian Creek Trail. 3.6 miles Strenuous  
 Hidden Falls Trail. 0.4 miles Easy  
 Window Falls Trail. 0.6 miles Easy  
 Upper Cascades Trail. 0.2 miles Easy  
 Rock Garden Trail 0.1 miles Easy  
 Moore's Wall Loop. 4.7 miles Strenuous  
 Lower Cascades Trail 0.4 miles Moderate  
 Tory's Den Cave Trail. 0.2 miles Easy  
 Tory's Den Trail. 2.4 miles Moderate  
 Ruben Mountain Trail. 2.9 miles Moderate

Magnolia Springs Trail. 0.4 miles Moderate  
 Cook' Wall Trail. 2.2 miles Moderate  
 Wolf's Rock Trail. 1.7 miles Moderate  
 Riverbluffs Trail 1.3 miles Easy  
 Chestnut Oak Trail. 0.7 miles Easy  
 Lake Trail 1.0 miles Easy  
 CCC Heritage Trail. 0.1 miles Easy  
 Mountains to Sea Trail. 7.4 miles Strenuous  
 \* Trail work has begun on the reroute to Hanging Rock that will eliminate the stair steps, make the trail wider and easier. The existing trail will remain open during construction.



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# Our RIVER is your RIVER



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The Dan River flows for 214 miles, starting in Virginia, winding through North Carolina on its way back into Virginia.

Fifty of the most beautiful of those miles flow through Stokes County. Visitors can soak in that beauty in a number of ways such as tubing, kayaking, canoeing, fishing. And there's nothing wrong with just sitting by the river bank, listening, watching the water flow.

The Dan River Basin Association publishes an interactive map that shows access points along the river,

including parks and cultural and historical attractions nearby. That can be found at <https://www.danriver.org/interactive-map>.

In 2021, the North Carolina portions of the river were designated a state paddle trail. In 2023, a Duke Energy grant provided funding for mile markers to be installed in the Stokes County portions, which will not only increase visitors ability to interact with the river but will increase safety as well.

## TUBING AND PADDLING

Tubing season runs from late-May through Labor Day

weekend.

A number of local business

in Danbury offer tubing trips

SEE **RIVER** ON PAGE 18 ►

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## ◀ RIVER FROM PAGE 17

down the Dan providing a tube and shuttle service to return you to your car after a relaxing afternoon.

For the more adventurous types, a couple of businesses like the Dan River Company also provide kayak and canoe rentals.

Rapids on the river are considered class 1, which is suitable for most beginning boaters at normal levels.

### FISHING

In 2017, the Greensboro-based Piedmont Land Conservancy recently transferred a large tract of land in northwest Stokes County to state wildlife officers for hunting and fishing. The Hill Farm Game Land includes almost two miles of access to the Dan River. The access is welcomed by Triad trout fishing enthusiasts because the Dan offers them the nearest option for pursuing

the popular game fish.

The Dan also hosts sizable populations of smallmouth bass, rare species of freshwater mussels, and a large variety of sucker fish. The river offers a myriad of opportunities for catching catfish, large-mouthed bass, sunfish, and many more.

For trout, stick to the colder upper reaches of the Dan, as it cascades out of Virginia and into Stokes.

### SAFETY

If you are planning a trip on the Dan, safety is always important. You should always check the river conditions by checking both the weather forecast for Zip Code 27046 as well as the volume of flow as reported by a USGS gage station at the Highway 704 bridge near Francisco (<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/nwis/uv?02068500>).



File photo



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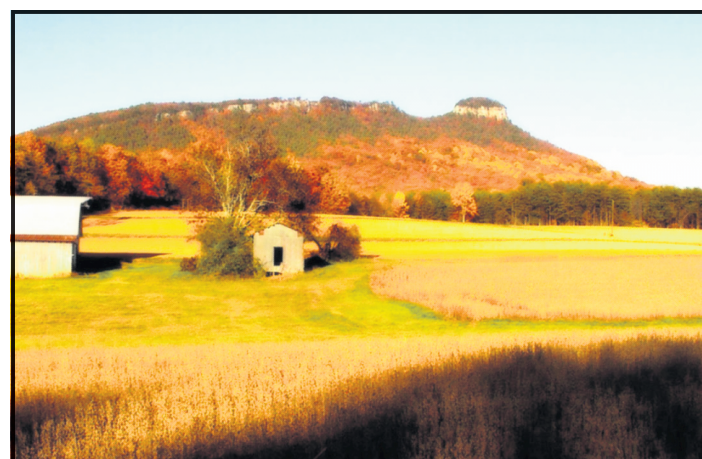
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## WELCOME FROM PAGE 4

instantly what he meant, and knew that his reality would be different here in Stokes County.

"Breathe the free air, and welcome," one council member said.

Visitors to the county will find that same theme running through, no matter what they decide to get into while they're here.

And there's a lot to do.

There's Hanging Rock State Park, the Dan River, parks, wineries and breweries.

There's festivals like Stokes Stomp, Francisco Farm Fest, KingFest, Ridge Fest and the Foothills Farm Festival.

There's downtown Main Streets and winding country roads; music, arts and trails.

This edition of "See Stokes" will acquaint you with everything Stokes County has to offer. Be sure to also check out the county's tourism website [www.hangingrock.com](http://www.hangingrock.com) and the "Hanging Rock" app to help put together your visit.

And remember, our county is your county. Breathe the free air, and welcome.



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SEE STOKES | 21

# Our TOWNS

## are your TOWNS

All three Stokes County municipalities — Danbury, King and Walnut Cove — are towns on the move.

Though times have changed, these downtowns maintain their historic character while revitalization efforts look to the future.

### DANBURY

The historic storefronts on Main Street in Danbury, the “gateway to Hanging Rock” are a destination unto themselves.

The Arts Place of Stokes, home of the Stokes County Arts Council, serves as the artistic hub of the county with frequent live music shows and live theater, works by local and regional artists on display in the Apple Gallery and for sale in the boutique.

Grab a treat from Rocky’s Ice Cream & Coffee located while you peruse, or sit outside and take in the view of Hanging Rock.

Next door is Artist’s Way Creations, a unique artisan bakery that provides deli-style lunch, baked goods.

Projects will begin this

year that will bring some new additions to Main Street in Danbury including a brewery and a farm-to-table restaurant.

The Wilson-Fulton Museum of Stokes History is also on Main Street.

The historic downtown area provides close access to other classic Danbury amenities. About a half a mile east is Moratock Park, with Dan River access and the historic Moratock Iron Furnace.

The Danbury General Store and Dan River Family Restaurant also can be found a short distance from downtown to the east.

J.E. Priddy’s General Store is located about two miles east of town.

In the other direction, on the way to Hanging Rock State Park, less than a mile west, the Danbury Public Library can be found along with the River Rock Cafe.

Keep traveling west on N.C. Highway 8/89 and you’ll find the Front Porch Creamery.

The Green Heron Ale House can be found just off that



File photos

**StoCo Provision Co., on Main Street in King, has emerged as a downtown social and community hub.**

highway on Flinchum Road about three miles west of downtown.

### KING


The cornerstone of the downtown King experience is the historic corner drugstore, King Drug Co. The family business has provided


pharmacy services to local families for more than 50 years. The best part — the sandwich grill and vintage soda fountain, which is open for lunch Monday through Saturday.

Across Main Street is another iconic King



El Cabo Mexican Restaurant is one of the dining options on Main Street in Walnut Cove.








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The Palmetto Theatre on Main Street in Walnut Cove serves as a live music and event venue and still shows movies throughout the month.

establishment: Gentry's Store, a hardware store that's been open since 1937.

Fun Time Arcade on Main Street is a family arcade and snack bar that offers modern and retro arcade games.

The downtown area, which spans Main Street and Dalton Road, features other new establishments as well such as retail stores, bakeries, art galleries and studios that are well worth a drop in.

Just south of Dalton Road on Main Street, StoCo Provision has emerged as the social hub of the downtown area. They serve locally roasted coffee and espresso drinks and North Carolina brewed beer and wine with plenty of indoor and outdoor seating. The family friendly, dog friendly space frequently hosts live music and food trucks many days of the week.

The Downtown King Partnership has big plans for downtown King that will continue to develop throughout the year. Not the least of which is the 1st Annual Oktoberfest event scheduled for Sept. 21, 2024.

About a half a mile east of downtown is the King Dairy-O, a tradition since 1947.

Recreation Acres park is within walking distance of downtown, as is the King Public Library.

## WALNUT COVE

Bustling downtown Walnut



An orangeade from the lunch counter at King Drug Co. is not to be missed.

Cove continues to evolve while maintaining ties to its historic roots.

The marquee lights of the Palmetto Theatre call like a beacon. The historic movie theater has been renovated and is now open to the public for movie nights and matinees as well as live music and other events. Check the poster board for listings.

In 2023, a craft-beer taphouse opened on Main Street called 1889 Taphouse. The family-owned, family-friendly (and dog-friendly) establishment was named for the year Walnut Cove was founded. Enjoy draft beer and live music from inside or on the patio, and order food from El Cabo just across the parking lot.

SEE TOWNS ON PAGE 24 ►



# ANNUAL EVENTS

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Gentry's Store, located on Main Street in King, has been open since 1937.



Get dinner and an ice cream at the iconic Dairy-O in King.



King Drug Co. has been in business for more than 50 years, and its sandwich grill is still open.



Just Plain Country store on Main Street in Walnut Cove offers antiques and unique treasures.



The Arts Place of Stokes is the home base of the Stokes County Arts Council and is a popular venue and local arts boutique on Main Street in Danbury.

#### ◀ TOWNS FROM PAGE 23

The Milk Bar, Main Street Diner and Oma's Coffee Shop are just a couple more options for downtown eateries.

Walnut Cove staple Just Plain Country Store offers winding trip down memory lane, with vendors selling a variety of antiques, collectibles and gifts.

Just north of Fifth Street and Main is Dr. Jack Fowler Park, a quaint small-town

park with an amphitheater. Maybe The Cove Group will be hosting one of their free concerts while you're in town.

Decked Out Burgers and Dogs makes for a fun stop south of the downtown area; north of downtown you'll find 311 Tavern.

West of town, off Brook Cove Road, Amrstrong Artisan Farm, an organic farm offers seasonal delights for the whole family.

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# Our EVENTS

## 2024 brings 50th Stokes Stomp

A sense of community pervades annual events throughout Stokes County. One enduring tradition, Stokes Stomp, will hit a 50-year milestone in 2024. Kicked off with a parade on the second Saturday of September, the beloved festival is a gathering of the county's best music and arts.

### APRIL

**Walnut Cove Cruise-In**, last Friday of the month starting in April through August, Main Street, Walnut Cove

**Spring Fest**, third Saturday, Main Street, Walnut Cove

**Meet Me on Main**, last Saturday, downtown King

**Spring Planting Festival**, Knight Farm, Lawsonville

**Shop the Block**, second Saturdays April to November, Walnut Cove

### MAY

**Concert in the Cove Series**, Thursday nights May to October, Cove Square, Walnut Cove

**SpringFest**, third Saturday, downtown Walnut Cove

**Francisco Cruise-In and**

**Art Show**, third Saturday, Francisco Community Building

**Memorial Day Ceremony**, late May, Veterans Memorial at King Central Park

### JULY

**Lawsonville Fireworks**, first Saturday of July, Piney Grove Church Road, Lawsonville

**Burgerfest**, first Saturday of July, Central Park, King

**Walnut Cove Freedom Fest/Fireworks**, July 4, Lions Park Drive, Walnut Cove

**King Fireworks**, July 4, Recreation Acres, King

### AUGUST

**Back-To-School Fun**, first Saturday, Fowler Park, Walnut Cove

### SEPTEMBER

**Stokes Stomp**, second Saturday, Moratok Park, Danbury

**Corn Maze and Pumpkin Patch**, early September/early November, Armstrong Artisan Farms, Walnut Cove

**Fall Fest**, third Saturday,

SEE EVENTS ON PAGE 26 ►



Submitted photo  
The Crooked Road Ramblers and the Old Dominion Cloggers perform at the 2021 Star Spangled Stokes Stomp.



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## EVENTS FROM PAGE 23

Main Street, Walnut Cove

**Farm Fun Day**, third Saturday of the month, Armstrong Artisan Farms, Walnut Cove

**Night Maze**, last weekend of the month, Armstrong Artisan Farms, Walnut Cove

**Harvest Festival**, first Saturday of the month, Armstrong Artisan Farms, Walnut Cove

**Pickin' at Priddy's**, fall Saturdays, Priddy's General Store, Danbury

## OCTOBER

**BBQ for Books with a Side of Bluegrass**, first Saturday, Nana-Mac Meadows, Pinnacle

**Foothills Farm Fest**, first Saturday, Knights' Farm, Snow Hill Church, Lawsonville

**Ridge Fest**, second Saturday, Sandy Ridge

**KingFest**, first Saturday, Central Park, King

**Fall Fun Day**, third

Saturday, Robertson Family Farm, Mountainview Road, King

**Pumpkins and Sunflowers**, September-October, Robertson Family Farm, Mountainview Road, King

**Farm Fest Along the Sunflower Trail**, third Saturday, Francisco-Westfield

**Look Up and Listen**, first Saturday of the month, Hanging Rock State Park Lake

**Trick-or-Treat on Main**, last Saturday, Walnut Cove

## NOVEMBER

**Veterans Day Ceremony**, Walnut Cove / King

**Just Plain Country Fest**, second Saturday, Main Street, Walnut Cove

**Soup in a Bowl**, third Saturday, The Arts Place, Danbury

## DECEMBER

**King Christmas Tree Lighting**, first Friday, Central Park, King

**King Christmas Parade**,



File photo

A varied lineup of music and dance artists will be featured on the main stage at the annual Stokes Stomp.

first Saturday, Downtown King

**Christmas in Historic Danbury**, first Sunday, Courthouse Square

**Christmas in the Cove/ Tree Lighting**, first Saturday, Fowler Park, Walnut Cove

**Walnut Cove Christmas**

**Parade**, second Saturday, Main Street

**Priddy's Christmas**, third Saturday, Priddy's General Store, Danbury

## JANUARY

**Polar Plunge**, January 1, Hanging Rock State Park



File photo

The Stokes Stomp for this year is the latest victim of the healthcare pandemic.

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# TRAIL Center at VADE MECUM

Site expands equestrian and hiking trail access

**Terri Flagg**

terri.flagg@thestokesnews.com

The recently refurbished Trail Center at Vade Mecum opened to the public in 2024, providing a spacious parking lot for horse trailers and cars along with a new access point to Hanging Rock State Park.

"It's just another opportunity for people that are outdoor enthusiasts to have a place to go to hike or ride," said Phil Barber, president of the Sauratown Trails Association.

That organization combined forces with

the Friends of Sauratown Mountain and the state park to revitalize the trail center, each dedicating funds and elbow grease to the project.

The trail center project cost about \$15,000 divided equally by the three organizations.

Work included clearing vines and brush from the parking lot and building, regrading the parking lot and spreading fresh gravel, all of which was completed by volunteers.

The trail, which leads to Tory's Den and loops back, needed some maintenance too, including fixing a bridge over a culvert to make it accessible for horses.

"It was a big project, but it's a beautiful facility now,"

said Henry Wilson, trail crew leader for FSM and the local Mountains-to-Sea Trail, who led the volunteer work crews.

"It's just turned out to be a great place for hikers and horseback riders to have a good parking area and a good, clean trail to ride on," said Barber.

The parking lot and trail are open regular park hours.

The trail center is the first driveway north of the Vade Mecum entrance on Moore Springs Road. The Vade Mecum area is currently closed with renovations set to begin this year.

The completed trail center project has many benefits for both horse riders and hikers.

The fixed-up trail about doubles the amount of trail

available to equestrians to about 10 miles.

"It's a much better experience for the equine people," Wilson said.

The hike from the trail center parking lot to the Tory's Den parking lot is about 4.5 miles round trip with an elevation of about 600 feet. Wilson said for most people it would be considered a moderate hike.

"It's definitely not completely flat, but we're not climbing Kilimanjaro here either," Wilson said.

The trail center also helps with the parking situation.

Previous to the opening of trail center parking lot, the only parking available for horse trailers was at the Tory's Den parking lot, and

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the few spots available there fill up quickly.

On busy days, parking can be tough at the other frequented lots even for those without a horse trailer. The trail center parking lot doubles as an overflow lot, giving hikers a new access point for the park.

Hikers parking at the trail center are asked to park along the side of the lot so that trailers can easily maneuver the parking area.

The trail center was active years ago when the Sauratown Mountain Trail, an approximately 22.5 mile trail that connects Hanging Rock and Pilot Mountain state parks, was first established in the 1980s.

R.M. Collins, a former King Elementary School principal, initiated the Sauratown Mountain Trail.

"He had this vision of tying the two parks together with a horse trail," Wilson said. Collins worked to obtain

landowner agreements to establish the trail and worked to clear it.

As those agreements change over time, as well as the Vade Mecum property changing owners and uses, the trail center has been idle for several years.

The three organizations gathered on April 24 to rededicate the trail center. The celebration started at 8:30 a.m. with a members hike from the trail center to Tory's Den along the R.M. Collins trail.

Back at the trail center, speakers included Wilson, Hanging Rock State Park Superintendent Robin Riddlebarger and James Booth, who helped build the initial trail along side Collins. The group then shared a meal.

"You could feel the sense of community and the love and pride we share for Hanging Rock State Park and the Sauratown Trail," said Donna

Alexander, of Friends of Sauratown Mountains. "It was really special."

Alexander said hearing Booth share stories of clearing the trail with Collins, strapping chainsaws to horses and heading out in the morning after working third shift, was a highlight.

"It was just great that the people that are really wanting to promote outdoor venues have all come together and

joined forces to do that," Barber said.

The goal is to eventually connect the R.M. Collins trail through the Vade Mecum property to the Sauratown Mountain Trail, which would eliminate any highway hiking.

"We're just so thankful that the three groups could get together and work on a project and it turned out so well," Barber said.

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