



Oconee welcomes agricultural events

BY STEPHANIE JADRNICEK
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — Next week, Oconee will honor its agricultural roots with two events. On Monday, Farm Oconee will kick off the festivities with a farm-to-table dinner featuring locally raised beef, pork and vegetables.

Then, the South Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair will continue the celebration Tuesday through Saturday with rides, barrel racing, clogging, music and an antique tractor parade.

Previously known as Steak in Oconee, Farm Oconee is an annual dinner to celebrate the agricultural industry in Oconee County.

"The purpose of the event is to provide an opportunity for folks in the farm industry, business representatives, government leaders and community members to engage with and hear from local farmers and those who deliver support to the industry," Oconee County Chamber of Commerce executive director Vanessa Penton said. "This also includes students within the school district ag classes, who play an integral part of the event."

School District of Oconee County FFA instructors serve on the committee, which selects the speaker for Farm Oconee. And after recently hearing Jessica Fry discuss the benefits of the Wild Hearts Equine Therapy Center, they were convinced they needed to look no further.

"I believe Wild Hearts Equine Therapy offers a service that could reach many people in Oconee County, and if we can help get the word out about them, all the better," Penton said.

Founded in July 2015 by Fry, Wild Hearts' mission is to provide a safe and compassionate environment of the highest possible quality for people to develop physical, emotional and behavior growth through the intuitive nature of the horse.

"Wild Hearts has been able to fulfill that mission for those we've helped," Wild Hearts operations manager and volunteer Janine Hartley said. "But there are so many more people we could help, given the means."

As a professional horse trainer and riding instructor, Fry pioneered a therapy approach that gives special-needs children and combat veterans the opportunity to train rescued horses.



Wild Hearts Equine Therapy Center founder Jessica Fry, right, leads a riding lesson. The therapy program uses rescued horses to work with special-needs children and combat veterans.

Each participant works one-on-one with Fry to train a horse from a local rescue center. They learn how to gain the horse's trust and teach basic skills to

prepare it for its next level of training. "Our accomplishments are numerous, but the accomplishment that we are most proud of is helping our clients," Hartley said.

Wild Hearts partners with Special Olympics, Upstate Warrior Solution and South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation. Over the past two years, the therapy program has doubled its equine staff.

"We love what we do and truly enjoy giving back to our community while helping Oconee County grow in a positive direction," Hartley said. "We are very honored to be asked to speak at the Oconee farm-to-table dinner."

Penton said Farm Oconee is the perfect kickoff for the South Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair. The dinner will take place

Monday at 5:30 p.m. at 178 Hayfield Road in Westminster. Tickets cost \$30, and ticket holders will receive a pass to the fair.

"So many times we work within a vacuum and are not aware of the all the diverse businesses that drive the economy of Oconee County," she said. "Any time we can bring the community together to help enlighten what others do within the county and create dialogues between them, we win."

The purpose of the fair is to educate and engage the region's residents and visitors in the history, beauty and values of a rural lifestyle while promoting the agriculture, heritage and economic development of Oconee County.

The Farm Bureau Farmer Appreciation Dinner is planned for Tuesday at 6 p.m. in the

main tent of the fairgrounds. The dinner offers a free meal to all area farmers.

Wednesday night is praise and worship night and also Westminster night — everyone who presents a Westminster utility bill will receive \$1 off admission. Thursday, Friday and Saturday will be filled with livestock shows and entertainment for the whole family.

For more information about Farm Oconee, call (864) 882-2097. The South Carolina Foothills Heritage Fair is located at 178 Hayfield Road in Westminster, across from Blue Ridge Electric.

For more information about the fair, call (864) 557-4453 or visit carolinafoothillsheritage-fair.org.

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Making an exception for a child-devouring clown

Going into last weekend, I honestly couldn't remember the last movie I went to see in the theater. It may have been "Rogue One" last December — one I saw by myself since my wife detests the "Star Wars" franchise — but I'm honestly not sure.

Whatever it was, I'm fully confident it wasn't anything from the horror genre, because I'm not really a big fan of having the bejesus scared out of me. For some reason, I agreed to go see "Paranormal Activity" with some friends several years ago,

and it took me about two weeks to get some decent sleep. To this day, I still don't know what I was thinking.

To really illustrate my aversion to terror on the big screen, I'm still scared to death of the Wicked Witch of the West. That green monstrosity — played by a woman who honestly sounds like she was a true angel — still petrifies me at the age of 33, and I've often imagined a scenario where I wake up and see someone dressed as her standing over me.

If a heart attack didn't

take me out first, I think I'd probably actually murder whatever pour soul it was who thought it was a good idea to try to scare me like that.

However, I digress as I try to get back to the point that it takes a rare event for me to see a horror movie.

Over the weekend,

I believe I went to my fourth-ever horror movie — "The Blair Witch Project," "Saw" and "Paranormal Activity" being the other three — to see "It." And, man, what an absolute treat it was.

While my wife watched it through a tiny opening between her fingers — her hands stayed glued to her face for basically the duration of the movie — I was wide open the entire time, enjoying the whole thing. It was extremely creepy and disturbing, but I only jumped one time.

Luckily, there were only two other people in the

theater, so not that many people had to hear the obscenity that accompanied the jump.

Not to turn this column into a full-blown advertisement for the newest adaptation of the Stephen King novel of the same name, the young cast was just outstanding, and it was well done all the way around — I couldn't recommend it more.

With Halloween coming up, I'm sure there's a huge slate of horror movies right around the corner, but I'll be staying away. They're generally just not good for my blood pres-

sure, and I hate thinking about demons haunting my house and terrorizing my family.

But for an eternal entity that likes to take the form of a clown — Pennywise the Dancing Clown, specifically — that feeds on children and their fears, I'm obviously willing to make an exception.

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