

By Sarah Cavacini February 13, 2020 Publication: Palatka Daily News (FL) Page: B6 Word Count: 524

Bluegrass music through the Rodeheaver Boys Ranch on Wednesday as over 100 RVs were already gathered for the 16th annual Spring Palatka Bluegrass Festival, which begins today.

The ranch, 380 Boys Ranch Road, was full of bustling volunteers getting the festival ready. More than 400 RVs are expected to arrive for the festival, said Jeff King, former development director for the ranch.

The event will run through Saturday, but some bluegrass fans have been camped out at the ranch since the weekend. Everything is falling into place for the event, he said.

All proceeds will go toward the boys ranch, which houses up to 50 boys who have no other home. The boys are trained socially, educationally, spiritually and vocationally, according to its website.

“Until you see bluegrass live, you can’t really appreciate the music,” King said. “It should be a great show.”

Bluegrass musicians such as Rhonda Vincent & The Rage, Lonesome River Band, Springfield Exit and Penny Creek Band are festival headliners. Tickets start at \$40 in advance or \$45 at the door and children under 7 are free.

Vendors, food and the opportunity to meet the bluegrass artists are other highlights for fans. Performers begin at noon, ending at 10 p.m. every day.

The event is being promoted by Evans Media Source this year, taking over for Adams Bluegrass LLC, which hosted the festival for 15 years. Norman Adams, who is still helping this year, is close to retiring, but his love for bluegrass keeps him there he said.

“I was born into (bluegrass),” Norman Adams said. “I’ve listened to it all my life. I love the music.”

Festival attendee and bluegrass lover Johnny Adams felt the same way. A mandolin player and maker from Winter Garden, he’s been attending the festival since it began, he said.

“You can never leave (the music) once you get into,” Johnny Adams said. “It’s a drug.”

He was playing music Wednesday morning with a group of fellow Bluegrass lovers. Guitar player Pete Petrik came from Fort Meyers on Monday for the festival. He’s been playing his Dobro, a resophonic guitar for bluegrass music, for 15 years and loves it.

“I got a Dobro. ... So I thought I better learn to play it,” Petrik said. “I had a band for many years playing country music then I got into bluegrass.”

The event is for all ages and Norman Adams said once people get a taste of bluegrass music, they'll never give it up.

“Everybody needs to try (bluegrass) one time,” Norman Adams said. “I always tell anybody that’s coming in new, ‘I got to warn you ahead of time, it’ll get in your blood.’”

For more information and tickets, call 385-3500.

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