

Music and Arts Festival
Family Tradition Continues

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Good things are repeated time and time again in life. This is because of the personal enjoyment received from the experience. This is the only way to describe my infatuation with my family's yearly week-end retreat to the Lake Eden Arts Festival held at Camp Rockmont in Black Mountain, North Carolina. This year's spring festival was no exception. The experience of attending this festival is almost impossible to describe to anyone that has never attended. When one thinks of a festival of music, dancing, art, and camping, it is easy to imagine a scene of intoxicated people, general out of control behavior, and no peace in which to sleep. Stop right here if that is your vision and clear your mind. The Lake Eden Arts Festival represents everything that is exactly the opposite of those things. This is a family oriented event that is well controlled and organized. There is no need for safety concerns at this festival of music, dancing and art. The organizers of this event represent what the concept of team work is supposed to be.

This years festival musical highlights included the music of the Red Clay Ramblers, with their style of old-time, folk, bluegrass, story telling, and humorous communication with the audience. This performance was attended by a large number of festival goers and it was obvious by their reactions to the show that this group of musicians maintains a fan base of many old fans as well as new fans. This performance covered material from their early years as well as some classic covers of other folk and bluegrass greats. Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys provided great dance music which was enjoyed by all as well. The festival goers were entertained by an extremely hot band, Inner Vision, which provided great rhythms for all lovers of reggae music. As I walked around throughout the weekend it became quite apparent that there was not one person in attendance at LEAF that was not having fun. This fun was obvious and could be seen in the dancing, the singing, the jamming, and the eating, as well as all of the many other activities offered during this festival weekend. There was great music enjoyed at each of the stages throughout each of the three days. The music experience began in the early morning hours and ended around 1:00 in the morning or so with some hot swing dancing at the dining hall with Scrappy Hamilton. These guys cooked from start to finish. I must say that this late night swing time continues to be one of my favorite times during the festival. It is after the late night swing sessions that I find myself making my way back to the camping area to begin that sometimes difficult task of locating my tent.

It is not just the music that makes LEAF so exciting. There are the many music and art work shops, the poetry slam, the many opportunities for dancing, and the many crafts displayed for enjoyment and for sale. This festival provides a vast amount of folk art and handicrafts as well as the opportunity to learn about and participate in many of the healing arts.

It truly was a wonderful week-end experience for my family as well as the many other families in attendance this year. The one thing that upsets me about this festival is that the music has to stop on Sunday evening. This year was no exception. While packing up the van and still humming some of the great music enjoyed, the reality is that all good things have to end. The good thing about LEAF is that it returns in the Fall of 2003 and again in the Spring of 2004. The bad thing is that I have to wait.

For more information please see www.theleaf.com

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