

# Falls Fest Takes a Bow

Thirty year annual outdoor event kicks off the last time tonight



By Cortney Wood

Lucy Park has been fenced off and the posters and billboards have been hung all around town. Through the years, Falls Fest publicity chair Lindsay Greer has never gotten used to the 5 o'clock rush. She has been a part of Falls Fest for the last 12 years and loves when people pour into the park eager for the familiar games, the thick, hot grease smell of deliciously unhealthy foods, and for the music humming the night. The park comes alive at five o'clock today.

The event was created to bring attention to the green spaces of Wichita Falls and the Junior League wanted to create an event that put people outdoors and would bring awareness to the parks. After 29 years, Falls Fest will kick

off for the last time this year.

Falls Fest provides nonprofit organizations the opportunity to run games at the event to create revenue and a decline of organizations that are able or willing to attend was a big contributor to the decision for this to be the last year.

Along with a declining attendance, the cost of entertainment has skyrocketed. This has been another factor in the decision to end Falls Fest.

Greer said the Junior League could easily charge \$20-25 a ticket for a popular artist to perform, but that isn't the point of Falls Fest.

"Everyone is a little heartbroken about it," Greer said. "I think it may be one of the best years ever because people want to be part of the last year of Falls Fest."

While this is the last year, English teacher Jennifer Doughty said the prices for the tickets have always been reasonable since most concert tickets in general range from \$30- \$50 and the quality of the event is "incredible, but it's good that they are ending on a high note."

Since the start of the event, Falls Fest has generated \$1.5 million for the Wichita Falls community and Greer said there have been several community improvements because of Falls Fest such as funding the construction of the Falls and the Dino Dig at Lucy Park; however it is time for a change.

For Doughty, her entire family tags along each year: her mother, her husband and her children.

"It's definitely a multi-generational event, and we know it's important to the community," Greer said. "It's been important to us at the Junior League and we are not brushing it under the rug, but it is time to do something

different."

While the Junior League has had suggestions on the next event after Falls Fest, they want to put all their efforts into Falls Fest. While the bustle of the event thrives tonight and tomorrow, the volunteers that put it altogether exemplify what makes up a community Greer said.

The event includes community competitions that assistant principal TiAda Radtke has attended for 20 years.

"I usually go just in the morning and go to the sand volleyball tournament recreationally because that's what happens when you get old," she said. "I hate that it's the last year because I think it's a good thing. I know a lot of people look forward to it and it brings out a bunch of good people."

Greer said that the Junior League sets out to combine volunteers with the community, but no other event the Junior League coordinates connects like Falls Fest.

"Falls Fest is one of the few things that really puts us into the community," she said. "This event is a true testament of what voluntarism is. It's not just Junior League members out there doing it. It's volunteers, it's city officials, it's Sheppard Air Force, it's Vernon. It's training our volunteers to work with different organizations and how to bring in different people from various parts of life."

And as Falls Fest ends, Greer said there is no better way to finalize the event than connecting it to a hometown success.

"We are really excited that Bowling For Soup is coming back to close out our event," Greer said. "They are a hometown band so for us it's special. It's amazing that we are going to have these hometown guys signing off for us."



Art by R'yn Miller.



Feature