

Mountain Youth Talent Contest

Sponsored by Jackson County 4-H in association with Catch the Spirit of Appalachia
(3/2016)

Qualifications, Rules, and Guidelines

The purpose of the Mountain Youth Talent Contest is to discover, develop, and encourage talent in the youth in traditional Appalachian music, storytelling and dance and provide an opportunity for young people to perform on stage before an audience. In hopes of encouraging a continuing "sense of place" for our young musical mountain youth, Jackson County 4-H and Catch the Spirit of Appalachia (CSA), a heritage organization, are providing outlets for this local talent. The Mountain Youth Talent Contests are designed primarily for amateur talent, but any act which qualifies otherwise is eligible even if the act received pay at some time EXCEPT where the person(s) are actually engaged in the entertainment business or are paid instructors of the Arts. Acts that may be considered professional should be brought to the attention of the organizers.

Mountain Youth Talent contests are produced at three locations:

- 1) Greening Up the Mountains Festival — Sylva, NC—April 23
- 2) Stecoah Valley Bluegrass Festival, Robbinsville, NC - May 16
- 3) Franklin Area Folk Festival at Cowee School, Franklin, NC—August 20

1. These contests are for the preservation of our mountain musical heritage, thus the act should reflect the local heritage and old Appalachian ways of our region. There is no entry fee.

Categories with examples include (but not limited to):

Vocal Performance – Individual or Group (old timey songs, old gospel songs, bluegrass, heritage tunes from the turn of the century)

Dance – Individual or Group (Clogging, Square Dance, Irish Folk Dance, Native American Dance)

Instrumentalists – Individual or Group (feature instruments such as banjo, fiddle, guitar, dulcimer, mandolin playing old timey songs, old gospel songs, bluegrass, heritage tunes)

Poetry/Storytelling (writings about heritage, items of historical significance, old timey ways, etc.)

NOTE: no recorded backup music is allowed. Please sing acapella or find someone to play an acoustic instrument with you. If you need assistance finding someone to play backup please let us know and we will offer some suggestions.

2. The contest is open to youth through the age of 18.

3. Individuals or groups must complete an official entry form and return it to the person indicated on the entry form before the deadline given. You will be notified when accepted and receive your spot.

4. All musicians must provide their own instruments, unless otherwise arranged beforehand.

5. “Best of Show” winner(s) from one talent contest cannot receive “Best of Show” in any future Mountain Youth Talent Contests in the same year.

6. Live performances will be judged on the following criteria:

1) Talent 2) Physical appearance (neatness, costuming, etc.) 3) Stage Presence 4) Expression 5) Showmanship 6) Overall impression

7. There will be at least three qualified (3) judges at each contest.

8. Prizes and trophies are different at each location. See entry form for the contest you are entering.

9. “Best of Show” winners are sometimes given additional opportunities to share their talents, such as a spot on the Heritage Stage on Mountain Heritage Day at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, and on the stage of the Smoky Mountain Center for the Performing Arts in Franklin.

Guidelines

Items our Judges Look for in a Talent Presentation

1. An instrument should become an extension of the person...is he/she comfortable with the instrument?

2. How well do they know the music? Do they have general ability? The more they practice, the more comfortable they become.

3. Is it musical? Is the individual aware of musical phrasing and trying to say something in the playing or singing of the song. Phrasing is the musical sentences of lines that should vary as a conversational sentence varies. Music was meant to touch people in a way that nothing else can. A real musician enjoys the potential of that and judges can see it.

4. Do they enjoy performing? Do the performers enjoy being on stage and serving the audience with their music. Generally a performer recognizes that clapping is a form of language and that bowing is important to do...so that you are saying, "Thank you."

5. Does the individual show respect to the audience with attention to his/her personal appearance?

6. Stage presence...depends on how well the performer knows the music so that he/she is:
1) free to give eye contact to the audience. 2) free to feel emotions in themselves in performing. This brings the audience in to the realm of emotion.

7. Many judges are music teachers. One judge has stated it this way: "As a teacher, I can see talent and I can see when someone practices a lot. If you have talent but do not work at it on a regular basis your performance will not be as good as someone else who works everyday because they enjoy it."

8. You have to enjoy what you are doing. It always shows in the overall performance.

9. Best of Show: From all the performances, the "Best of Show" winner will have most of the above attributes and talents. It takes more ability to sing and play at the same time; it takes more ability for a group to sing and play well together. But sometimes the pure talent of a person will rise above the group and stand out.