

## The Smyth County Jam Festival 2011 - CANCELED

For the first time in our history, the stage will be silent at our annual Labor Day Weekend event. As you may or may not know, we started the Smyth County Jam Festival as the Saltville Jam back in 1997 to honor our dear friend Ken Collins who loved our music so much. We moved to the Chilhowie Recreation Park in 2009 and held our festival there for two years.

The local area musicians and their friends provided some of the best Bluegrass, Old Time and Acoustic music that has ever been seen or heard in our area and to all of them we are very thankful.

It was a tough and gut-wrenching decision to cancel the jam after 14 years, but many factors came into play that helped us make a decision. I will try to describe some of them briefly below:

At the time we started the Labor Day Jam, we didn't have a weekly jam. The only time the area musicians and friends got to play together was at this annual event. Since 2001, we have had a weekly jam in which Sandy and I have devoted at least 50 nights a year. We haven't done it alone, but we have also not missed many nights even though we have both gone and are going through some tough health issues. We have never made any money off of the jams, and never intend to; they are strictly a labor of love for the music and people.

There is a tremendous amount of work and preparation that goes into these Festivals along with a lot of stress and responsibility. It has always been a daunting task, but we have always managed to pull it off. In the first 12 years, Sandy and I bore most of the expense ourselves, but we have had a lot of financial help over the past two years, thanks to the great musicians and fans that attend our weekly Smyth County Jam in Chilhowie. We also had a lot of physical help in the first few years, but as time went on, it seemed that fewer and fewer people would turn out to help us. All the great musicians and singers always did their job of entertaining, but I'm talking about building stages, sitting up tents, running sound, designing flyers and passing them out, picking up trash, etc. Being a labor of love, it didn't bother us too much back then. But now that we are older, it is much harder.

As you may know, there are a lot of liabilities and unknowns in an event of this type not to mention a lot of politics and scheduling issues. Everyone involved has really worked hard to help us over the years; this includes the Saltville Lions Club and the Town of Chilhowie and too many others to mention. Many thanks to all of you for helping us over the years.

So to summarize, we are not having the Smyth County Jam Festival this year. We may kick it back off next year or in a future year, but we will be picking every Monday night at the Smyth County Jam, so make plans to attend these weekly events whenever possible.

Once again I want to thank everyone personally for helping make these jams possible.

*Larry Hogston*