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By Amy Jones

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Festival features music, dancing and family fun, all in the great outdoors

BLACK MOUNTAIN -- With the lazy days of summer behind us, and autumn in full swing, it's hard to know what to get done first when the weekend comes. So consider bumping those tedious tasks like laundry and cleaning out the garage to the bottom of the list and head on over to the Lake Eden Arts Festival in Black Mountain during the next three days. Here are a few reasons why it's at the top of our list:

Location, location, location:

It's not just jam-packed with live music, activities for children and more dancing than a week of high school prom nights -- LEAF is held at Camp Rockmont, a cradle of Blue Ridge beauty featuring a tranquil lake, several hiking trails and an old fashioned dining hall.

Hear what you've been missing

There's a big wide world out there, much of it with some great stories told through music. Take the Sierra Leone's Refugee Allstars. They've lived to talk after one of the bloodiest civil wars in the history of the world and they make survival sound beautiful. Of course legends like Richie Havens, also playing the festival, are great storytellers about things we can relate to right here in this country. And don't miss the Skatellites. They can make even white people think they've got the right reggae dancing moves.

There are always some surprises

Along with the headliners, LEAF delivers some lesser known acts that always wow the audience. Spend some time with the schedule, and just wandering around the festival grounds, looking and listening for the unexpected.

Scoring some grown-up time

As young parents of young children, it's not easy getting quality childcare to go to the concerts with us. At LEAF, mom, dad and baby get to have a good time with on-site babysitting services as well as several new, beefed up child-centric offerings including the kids village, Kids Handmade Art Market and Kids Parade.

It takes less gas than a drive up the Parkway

For most of us, the thought of spending one more day in the car, fighting traffic and burning a costly tank of gas ranks right up there with putting in overtime on the job, no thanks. Clocking in at 15 to 20 minutes from downtown Asheville, the ride to LEAF is worth the spare change. Remember once you get there, a day's ticket is good until the last performer exits the stage.

Jones writes about music for the Citizen-Times. E-mail ajontheair@hotmail.com

CATCH THE FESTIVAL

What: Lake Eden Arts Festival

When: Today through Sunday Where: Camp Rockmont, Black Mountain