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# Wilkes Journal-Patriot

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**Fifth Singing in the Foothills is a success**  
by Jule Hubbard

(Photo caption) Jule Hubbard/staff photo-THE COLLINGSWORTH FAMILY was among 17 Southern gospel groups at Singing in the Foothills, which was Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights at North Wilkesboro Raceway Park.

Southern gospel music fans from across the eastern United States and Canada converged on Wilkesboro Raceway Park in the Mount Pleasant community for the fifth annual Singing in the Foothills Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

A firm attendance figure hasn't been determined yet, but organizers said totals Thursday and Friday nights possibly were records for those nights. The record total for all three nights is about 5,000 in 2008.

Featured artists this year included the Hayes family (from Boone), the McKameys, the Whisnants, the Reggie Saddler Family and the Inspirations on Thursday. Friday's lineup included Gold City, Michael Combs, the Hoppers, the Browns and Gold City.

Featured Saturday were the Greens (from Boone), Greater Vision, the Collingsworth Family, the Primitive Quartet, the Talley Trio, Karen Peck & New River and Allison Durham Speer.

Some of these groups perform traditional, while others do more up and coming Southern gospel music.

Joe Landers of Dayton, Ohio, one of five volunteer judges for the Southern gospel music talent show at Singing in the Foothills, said the key defining features of this musical genre are close harmony (usually three-part or four-part harmony) and a clear message about Jesus Christ and salvation.

Singing in the Foothills is unique among major annual Southern gospel music festivals for being a fundraiser rather than a for-profit event.



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All net proceeds go to Ebenezer Christian Children's Home on Byrd Ridge Road, North Wilkesboro, where children from broken homes live for various lengths of time in a Christian-based family atmosphere.

Ebenezer Executive Director Jean Davis said the children's home recently served its 200th child since opening in 1994. Although licensed as a group foster home for 33 children, it averages about 25.

Starting in July, said Mrs. Davis, Ebenezer will be able to license foster homes. She said it also has been authorized to adopt children.

Ebenezer's first foster home away from Byrd Ridge Road, called the Joe Severt Home, is nearing completion in the Oakwoods community near Wilkesboro.

Although the majority of children come to Ebenezer after being referred by the courts, private referrals also are accepted. About half of these children end up being returned to their biological parents, but some later return to Ebenezer when more problems occur in their homes.

Young people who were served by Ebenezer again came on stage during Singing in the Foothills to speak about their experiences at the home.

A girl named Andrea spoke Saturday, telling how she lived in a broken home and was raising her younger siblings when she came to Ebenezer at age 15 and found the good home she never had before.

"All I had ever heard about God was that he was going to send me to hell one day if I did bad. At Ebenezer I learned that God is about love and that Christ loved me," she said.

"I believe with all my heart that God saved me. If I had never gone to Ebenezer, I wouldn't have been saved. God put me there. He will save you just like he saved me." People in the audience were asked to consider making donations to Ebenezer in offerings on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights.

John Wishon, chairman of the Ebenezer board of directors and emcee for Singing in the Foothills, said there are more broken homes in Wilkes County and a greater need for Ebenezer than ever.

In the style of an old fashioned camp meeting, Wishon spoke about people being saved during this year's Singing in the Foothills. He is a minister, Southern gospel singer and owner of WVVWC radio station in Wilkesboro.

With the stage and all seating for the event beneath a big open-sided tent, Singing in the Foothills is unique among annual Southern gospel events for being held outdoors. There also likely aren't too many Southern gospel festivals held on the grounds of a drag strip. Owners of the dragstrip make the property available for the event at no charge.

There are well over 100 volunteer workers at Singing in the Foothills, mostly local people.

Bridgett Gardner, volunteer coordinator of the talent search at each year's Singing in the Foothills, said 11-year-old Sara Hughes of Ash (in Brunswick County) was the youth solo division and overall winner. She sang "Time to Wake Up."

The overall winner is paid to sing at the following year's Singing in the Foothills. Ms. Hughes took second place in the last two youth competitions.

Chad Muncy of King sang "The Judgment" and was the adult solo winner. Adoration from Bennettsville, S.C., won the group competition with "Give Me That Mountain."

Muncy, 26, said he was laid off from his factory job a month ago and his wife had their second child a few days ago, so he is hoping to earn money for his family by singing Southern gospel music.

First place winners in each division received a trophy, \$1,000 in cash, two three-day passes to Singing in the Foothills 2011 and sang their winning song at the 2010 Saturday night concert.

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