

Pickin' and grinnin' at the state park

Musicians from all over settle in Westmoreland for a few days of fun

By Jennifer Roberts

Music filled the air when pickers from all over the world gathered at the Westmoreland State Park last weekend.

The pickers are part of an Acoustic Guitar Group that talks on a news page on the Internet.

This year more than 50 people gathered together for the weekend. The furthest traveled for the event was Dietre Ossenberg and his son Stefan from Germany.

This is the third time he has come since 2000 but he said that he couldn't come every year because it is so expensive.

"I found out about this on the Internet," Ossenberg said. "When this came up I decided to come here (in 2000)," he added.

Many others traveled from all over the country. Some traveled from Ohio, California and even Texas for the event.

Another father and son duo travel to the event each year from near Rockville, Maryland.

Jeff and Aaron Bernstein have been coming since Aaron was 4 years old.

As a matter of fact, Aaron is a picker himself.

"I have been two years playing the guitar," the now nine-year-old said as he was swinging on the swing set.

According to his father, who was sitting in the swing next to him, Aaron has been taking lessons.

The youngster even participates in open-mic. Open-mic is an event held on Friday and Saturday nights each year of the four-day weekend.

Those who wish to get up on stage and pick have a chance to show their stuff.

"He surprised me last year when he did four songs," Bernstein said.

This time the youngster had it all planned out, he was going to play 'America the Beautiful' and a song he

calls 'the night song.'

Bernstein, who has been playing for 31 years using finger style play where no pick is used, plans to continue to come to the event each year.

Robert Gebeaux of Oak Grove said that the group has been meeting at the park for six years and one year prior to that they met at The Heritage in Warsaw. Gebeaux, who owns Gebeaux Guitars in Montross, said he has been participating in the group for three years now.

When asked how he found out about the group he said, "Word of mouth. I can't remember who told me but it was a word of mouth kind of thing."

He said that there were some folks from Colonial Beach and Gloucester at the event as well.

According to Dan Kozar, another picker at the event, there are three major gatherings each year. One of them is on the West Coast, one on the East Coast and one in England. For those interested in finding out more about the guitar group, Gebeaux said to "get on the Internet and start talking."