

Rusty Spur Trail Riding

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by Susan Marquez

Timmy Jones has two passions in life, bluegrass music, and horses. "I ride every chance I get," Timmy says. "I love to go trail riding." Timmy is a native of Transylvania County, in western North Carolina. "I was born and raised here," he says. "I've always had a farm here."



Growing up, Timmy was surrounded by music. His father was a bluegrass musician. "My dad played with Lawrence Lane and the Kentucky Grass." But the person with the most musical

influence on Timmy was his grandfather on his mother's side. "My granddaddy picked guitar and banjo when I was growing up. I loved hearing him play. And of course, the church was a big part of my musical upbringing as well." Timmy grew up in the Mountain Holiness Church and says his mother, aunts, and grandmother did a lot of "old-time mountain singing." Timmy was drawn to artists like Bill Monroe. "When I was around ten years old, I joined a Southern Gospel band, and when I was 13 or 14, I met Bobby Powell, and we played together a good bit."

Before starting their band in 2007, Carolina Blue, Timmy, and Bobby had the opportunity to play with two larger-than-life local bluegrass musicians, Roy Chapman, and Joe Byers.

"Roy was the fiddler of the county," Timmy says. "He's the one who played for all the square dances and local shows."

Carolina Blue hosts an annual festival, the Roy Chapman and Joe Byers Bluegrass Bash, each November in Brevard, North Carolina, to honor the men and to raise money for local student musicians. The festival was canceled last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The music scene has been dead around here," says Timmy, who laments that Carolina Blue was set to have their Grand Ole Opry debut on April 6. "They have moved it to June. They didn't want us to perform there without an audience."





While he has always farmed, performing has been an important side gig. "I had to do something to earn some extra income," he says. "More and more people were asking me to take them on trail rides, and someone suggested I look into starting a trail riding business." Timmy investigated what it took to start a full-fledged trail-riding operation. "My wife, Lakin, is running the business with me. We've had to jump through a lot of hoops, but we are determined to make it work."

With their business, Rusty Spur Trail Rides, LLC, Timmy, and Lakin will take riders on one-hour, two-hour, and four-hour trail rides. "We'll also be doing some all-day rides for more

experienced riders where we will provide a picnic lunch," Timmy says. Plans are in the works to have two to three overnight trail riding/camping trips which will include a barbeque dinner, full country breakfast, and of course, live music for entertainment.

Timmy says he is blessed to be in an area that is so scenic.

"We can ride in the Pisgah National Forest and the DuPont State Forest. This is just a beautiful area."

Pisgah National Forest was established in 1916. Once part of the Vanderbilt estate, Edith Vanderbilt sold 86,700 acres to the Federal Government in 1914. The park now covers 512,758 acres of mountainous terrain in the southern Appalachian Mountains. Rusty Spur is in Pisgah Forest, North Carolina, an unincorporated community in Transylvania County, an area noted for its many waterfalls and rare white squirrels. The area is fast becoming a popular retirement area with many hiking trails and trout streams. "Seeing the area from horseback puts the rider close to nature in a way that is unique to horseback riding."

There are currently eight horses in the Rusty Spur stable, and Timmy says he would like to add a couple more. The trail rides are for riders of all experience levels, including beginners.

"If you've never been on a horse before, or if it's been a while, we can give you a little 'driver's ed' class to teach you the basics. Of course, the number one rule we tell everyone is to have fun!" For beginners, a one-hour ride is usually recommended. Once you have been on a horse a few times, the longer rides afford more opportunities to see the scenic views of the area.

Timmy and Lakin are excited about their trail riding venture.

The couple lives and works on their farm with their French bulldog, Rosie. Timmy hopes that area residents and tourists alike will want to experience a trail ride adventure. You see things from a horse's back that you can't see from a car or from hiking.

"We want to introduce as many people as we can to the trail riding experience."

Rusty Spur's website address is www.rustyspurtrailrides.com. The company also has a Facebook page, www.facebook.com/rustyspurtrailrides, with current updates.