DOBSON, N.C. — Surry County is a hotbed for old-time music and that genre takes center stage every year at the Surry Old Time Fiddlers Convention at Surry Community College.

This year's fiddlers convention is set for April 6-7. Now in its ninth year, the event features a traditional community dance Friday evening and a full day of workshops and competitions Saturday. More than 100 bands and individuals will enter the competitions, with nearly $5,400 available in prizes for winners in both youth and adult categories.

"Our cash prizes are right in line with the bigger festivals and that helps us get good quality bands. Typically, we have anywhere from 18 to 24 bands competing," says Buck Buckner of the convention committee. "And last year, we actually had 95 individual competitors. The bulk of those were in the youth categories, and we were really pleased with that."

Saturday's youth competitions begin at 11 a.m. Individual categories include variety, guitar, folk song, banjo, fiddle and dance, as well as a category for bands. Adult competitions begin at 3 p.m., followed by band and dance categories.

Festivities on Saturday include instructional workshops for fiddle, banjo and guitar, as well as open jam sessions across the campus. The college's grill features a luthier display along with dining options for attendees.

Friday evening's 7 p.m. square dance includes performances by the Slate Mountain Ramblers of Mount Airy, and the New Ballard's Branch Bogtrotters of Fries, Va.

The Slate Mountain Ramblers are a family band with deep ties to the old time music world. Patriarch Richard Bowman grew up learning from the masters like Tommy Jarrell and Fred Cockerham. Bowman was featured in the first issue of the Old Time Herald in 1987.

"The Slate Mountain Ramblers play the traditional Round Peak style of music, and that's the style around here," Buckner says. "They play in such a way that the dancers are eager to be involved. They can get after it, and so can the New Ballard's Branch Bogtrotters."

Formed in 1986, the Bogtrotters have been a driving force in carrying on the traditional music of the Blue Ridge mountains for future generations of musicians.

Admission is $5 daily, with children 12 and younger admitted at no charge. Contestants get in free Saturday. For info on the Surry Old Time Fiddlers Convention, call (336) 366-4034 or visit **www.SurryOldTime.com**. For lodging info, go to **www.YadkinValleyNC.com**.

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