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about; havin' a few beers and kickin' up the heels are pastimes every working soul craves, at least in theory. In practice, one of Williams' biggest hits, "All My Rowdy Friends Are Coming Over Tonight," was recently pulled from "Monday Night Football" because of some comments he made about the president. Brad Paisley made mention of the weekly football telecast not being the same without its anthemic opening song in a fun gag at the Country Music Awards late

Hank Williams Jr. show

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Saturday

WHERE: Ironstone Amphitheatre, 1894 Six Mile Road, outside Murphys

TICKETS: \$45 to \$240 at ironstoneamphitheatre.net, etix.com or (800) 514-3849

last year; I'm inclined to agree. Like Ted Nugent, Williams just says what he feels and lets the world keep on

spinning; after all, that's what it does. I have to respect artists whose talents remain as true as their voices,

whether we agree with them or not.

Williams has twice been named Entertainer of the Year at the CMAs and earned the title thrice from the Academy of Country Music. He has inspired countless garage rockers to ramble through raucous riffs, screaming from the rafters, encouraging their friends to join the party.

Great blues and some butt-kickin' country and rock make for a beefy start to the series that includes the likes of Tony Bennett, The Fray, Heart, Kelly Clarkson, John Fogerty, Reba McEntire and Jeff Foxworthy.

The ticket prices are about the same as they have been for the past few years, so your wallet won't be hit too hard. Some shows are selling well, so if you have a favorite you want to see, I'd grab my tickets now at ironstoneamphitheatre.net. New this year, you can purchase tickets to more than one show in one fell swoop of the debit card.

I'm ready for a party; let's hang loose and enjoy the ride.

Contact Mike Taylor at mtaylor@sierralodestar.com.

Family dinners bring train rides and fun

I love the people of the Mother Lode. When a car drives by while I'm walking my dog, the driver waves hello. Having lived in the city, I can easily say that the drivers here are much more pleasant to be stuck in traffic with, too. Bless small towns; they're friendly places to live and visit.

Jim and Leslie Hurst seek to contribute to that small-town family atmosphere. Jim's family has a history of moving from place to place as people have moved in to build homes and businesses, but this time, Leslie said the family wants to turn more toward the people side of their farm and ranch business, rather than stray from it. That's why the couple started the Hurst Ranch Barbecue last year. This year, the Friday night summer dinners offer Table Mountain beef, Aunt Carol's Apricot Pepper Chicken, baked beans and rice, cornbread and blackberry cobbler. Most of that lineup features foods from Hurst Ranch. In addition to selling items at their feed



Courtesy photo

Hurst Ranch opens up for Friday night hoedowns through Aug. 31.

store in Jamestown, the Hurst family sells olive oil, beef, blackberries and more at the weekly events.

Visitors can also take a ride on the Hurst's 1940s miniature train, modeled after the Southern Pacific trains that once served as a ride at Griffith Park in Los Angeles. Leslie said Jim found it in a barn years ago and bought it without telling her. She enjoyed the surprise, especially

when she discovered it and the family decided to use it as a part of the barbecue experience. The train goes around a small lake, a barn and a water wheel with flumes and it overlooks a nearby creek.

"Sometimes the Jamestown train goes by and they whistle at us, and we whistle back at them," Leslie said with a laugh.

Reservations (\$25 for adults, \$12 for children 12 and under) must be made each Friday before noon by calling 984-4040 or at hurstchuckwagon.com. Leslie said the gates open at 5:45 p.m. with dinner served at 7 p.m. An Old West stage show starts at 8 p.m., featuring music from the Sierra Mountain Band – Brent Pierce, Elida Ickes, David Rainwater and Keith

Keenom – which plays everything from old-time favorites to gospel, bluegrass and more.

"It's the way in the Old West everybody played things people remembered,"

Leslie said. "You can't go anywhere else and get this. One guy told us he remembered this type of thing from when he was young, like the old days when people got together and had dinner and someone had a fiddle and would play."

The family and community aspects of the Friday events are important to Leslie, who said the ranch will do whatever it takes to make people comfortable, including allowing groups to bring their own decorations for celebrations. The ranch also has an area for handicapped chairs and will provide cushions to those who prefer to avoid the hard picnic bench surfaces.

"The dinners are an extension of what we've already done," Leslie said. "We've been in business here for 30 years. It's pretty hard for a little family to go up against big stores. We sat down as a family and said, 'What have we got that they don't?' Family. We capitalized on that and made an experience for people. The only thing we've got is that we're a family. We raise our own food. Why not share it and build it that way?"

Leslie and Jim's son, Thomas, is taking over the feed business while his parents focus on the dinners. The seating area, stage and train ride take up about 5 acres of the 50-acre Hurst property, which the family bought in 1980. And

Tuolumne Talk

Harmony Wheeler



Hurst Ranch Barbecue

WHEN: 7 p.m. Fridays through Aug. 31

WHERE: 17415 Highway 108, outside Jamestown

TICKETS: \$25 for adults and \$12 for children 12 and under at 984-4040 or hurstchuckwagon.com

Leslie said, so far, the summer dinners have been successful.

She says she enjoys meeting people, and not just the expected tourists. Many of those who come are her neighbors, who attend several times in a row just because they enjoy a good meal, nice show and community fellowship.

"The whole idea of a family place is to be a family," Leslie concluded.

Send your Tuolumne County events to Harmony Wheeler at hwheeler@sierralodestar.com and mtaylor@sierralodestar.com.



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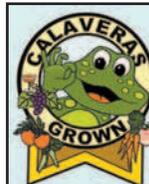
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