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'A whole other world'

By: Ralph Nardone 09/02/2008

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Dolores Hippler and Patrick Harper, of Lake Ariel, founded PocoNotes in order to bring high quality music of all genres to smaller venues in northeast Pennsylvania. With heartfelt dedication to promoting the musical arts, PocoNotes developed a busy schedule for 2008.

In March, PocoNotes kicked off its third acoustic "storytelling" season with a four-event series titled "Hear 'em at the Comm." The events take place at the Waverly Community House in Waverly, Lackawanna County.

Through the series, audiences enjoy artists that Hippler says will "impact them for the rest of their lives."

PocoNotes is a dream come true for Hippler and Harper, both of whom have personal experience with the Sept. 11 attack in New York City. Harper escaped with his life from Tower II of the World Trade Center and vowed never to live in fear again.

Hippler and Harper provided the seed money for PocoNotes from their own personal finances and call their venture a true labor of love. Its mission is to fill the halls of northeast Pennsylvania with quality live music of all types in a comfortable setting. On Sept. 13, a special "Hear 'em at the Comm" session, dubbed a "musical odyssey" by Hippler, will occur.

The odyssey entails local musicians playing with musicians from New Orleans, creating music together for a second time in so many years.

The theme centers around remembering what was lost in New Orleans after the Katrina disaster and, more importantly, what still remains. The city is still rebuilding after suffering 1,800 deaths \$81 billion in damage, Hippler notes.

"NEPA and NOLA play well together" she says.

Spencer Bohren will perform. He has musical roots in New Orleans and also has spent many years traveling North American and Europe. In the past, Bohren has shared the stage with legendary New Orleans musicians such as the Neville Brothers, Hippler says. Accompanying Bohren will be Pat Flynn, a well known local guitarist who fronted bands named Bent Blue, Mere Mortals and The Underground Saints.

As a student of classical guitar, Flynn enjoys exploring all kinds of music. "I always loved working with different musicians and styles. The beauty of music is that you never stop learning," he says.

The Sept. 13 program will include an educational workshop for working and would-be musicians. The workshop is supported by a \$3,000 grant from the Lackawanna County Arts and Cultural Grant program which is run by the county commissioners and the Lackawanna County Council on Arts.

During the workshop Bohren will share the skills he mastered over his 40-plus years on the road. He currently instructs upcoming artists at the prestigious Fur Peace Ranch Guitar Camp run by Jorma Kaukonen from the Jefferson Airplane, according to Hippler. He offers a "veritable treasure trove of guitar techniques" musicians will appreciate.

Flynn points out that musicians who perform in PocoNotes events are not and will not be part of the "disposable pop" beamed to consumers from mainstream radio and television.

"There is a whole other world of music to be discovered," Flynn says. PocoNotes offers these varied musical genres at small venues for the pure enjoyment of local audiences. "You can clearly see that joy of discovery on the people's faces who come to the shows," he says.

In April of 2008, Patrick Sweany, who plays 150 shows across the U.S. each year, performed at the Waverly Community House. In June, "Little" Toby Walker, who has toured Europe and has released several CDs, was featured artist. In November, Roy Bookbinder will perform. Bookbinder has played with such big-name artists as B.B. King, Bonnie Raitt and Ray Charles.

Each "Hear 'em at the Comm" event includes a workshop and a "meet and greet" where music enthusiasts can talk to the experienced performers, take photos and get autographs.

Maureen Duffy, owner of Duffy Accessories in Scranton attended the Toby Walker concert and said his performance was "amazing." She met with him after the show and received an autographed CD.

"To this day, I continue to mention the show and the great time I had to my customers and friends," she says.



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In addition to unforgettable musicians, the Sept. 13 event boasts members of local Boy Scout Troop 322 of Dickson City headed by Scranton attorney, Frank Marcin, who will serve as honorary ushers.

In the future, PocoNotes will continue to choose venues in neighborhoods all over northeast Pennsylvania that can provide settings suitable for intimate evenings of music, the organizers say.

Tickets for "Hear 'em at the Comm" and any PocoNotes event are available at 1-888-800-POCO or www.PocoNotes.com.

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