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8th Acoustics for Autism raises funds for families

3/9/2015

BY RONEISHA MULLEN
BLADE STAFF WRITER



Ava Lawrence, 6, left, and her brother Owen Lawrence, 9, both of Grand Rapids, Ohio, creating with Legos.

For years, Nicole Khoury watched as her friends unsuccessfully negotiated with insurance companies and fell into debt trying to get care for their children with autism.

In 2008, she decided it was time to do something. She picked up a guitar and asked dozens of other musicians to take the stage with her to raise money for the families.

“I was getting very bothered that the money was going to providers of resources,” Ms. Khoury, 37, of Toledo said. “Families had to come up with a lot of money out of pocket. It was disheartening seeing them try to come up with the money and couldn’t.”

On Sunday, Ms. Khoury and more than three dozen bands and solo acts came together again for the eighth annual Acoustics for Autism event. The daylong benefit has

become a local tradition, with hundreds of supporters filling the Village Idiot, Buster Browns, and an adjacent corridor in Uptown Maumee for the show.



Stacey Lucas, of Bowling Green, left, and Jenni Hahn, of Perrysburg, checking out an Acoustics for Autism T-shirt.

The event pulls together some of the most popular names in local live music, including the Jaeglers, Artic Clam, Noisy Neighbors, Kyle White, Beg to Differ, and many others, to raise money for autism awareness and to assist families affected by the disorder.

The free concert series also featured food, children’s activities, costumed characters, and a beer garden. Boosters conducted silent auctions, called for donations, and sold raffle tickets for items that included gift baskets and certificates, jewelry, and Cedar Point tickets.

“It’s a nice event and it’s for a good cause,” Jim Tracy, 60, of Maumee said. “This is my fourth year here. It feels good to raise money for a good foundation.”

About one in every 68 children is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, according to a 2014 report from the Centers for Disease Control. Autism is five times more common in boys than girls, and spans across all races and socioeconomic groups. While there is no cure for autism, medications and therapies are used to treat symptoms characterized by social and communication challenges.



Project iAm executive director Nicole Khoury, left,

Kim Patterson, knows first hand the challenges. Mrs. Patterson of Holland has an 17-year-old-autistic son. While her family hasn’t had a problem getting treatment, Mrs. Patterson said it’s important for people to support the cause.

“[My son] is pretty high-functioning, so we’re good, but events like this are still really important. It keeps the money local and in the hands of the families.”

Last year, Project iAm, the nonprofit organization that puts on Acoustics for Autism, gave \$20,000 in scholarships to families affected by autism for resources, information, support, and financial assistance. This year, organizers hope to give \$30,000.

Marissa Tschan, of Toledo, and Darryl Robinson
drummer for Dave Carpenter and the Jaegers.

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