

And the bands played on: Acoustics for Autism returns to rock Maumee and help families

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BY JASON WEBBER / THE BLADE



Perrysburg residents Aubrey Fannin, 8, Luke Fannin and Emilia Fennin, 6, dance as members of Uncle Knucklefunk perform “Leon B’on” during Acoustics for Autism on March 5 in Maumee.

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In 2008, the first Acoustics for Autism was held at the Village Idiot in Uptown Maumee, featuring one stage and 12 bands. When the 17th annual Acoustics for Autism takes place on Sunday, it will feature 95 bands and eight stages throughout uptown Maumee.

The event has grown but the cause still remains the same — raising funds for the non-profit organization Project iAm, which provides scholarship funds for families with children affected by autism.

At a press conference scheduled to announce the 2024 incarnation of the festival, Jim MacDonald, recently sworn in mayor of Maumee, stood on the stage of the Village Idiot where the inaugural Acoustics for Autism took place in 2008.

“In 2008, when the very first Acoustics for Autism took place right on this very stage, one in 88 children were identified with autism spectrum disorder, according to the CDC,” said Mayor MacDonald.

IF YOU GO

What: Acoustics for Autism

When: Noon to 2 a.m. Sunday

Where: Uptown Maumee

How much: Free

Information: acousticsforautism.com

“In 2020, that number changed to one in 36. We know that more families than ever before are impacted by autism and that includes our city staff, many of whom have friends or family who live with autism. It’s also one of the main reasons that the city of Maumee is so proud to host this amazing music festival which benefits so many people in our community and beyond. To date, this event has helped raise more than \$800,000 to support individuals with autism.”

Mayor MacDonald said that more than 15,000 people attended the music festival last year and it was expected that number or more would be attending this year. The mayor then turned the microphone over to Toledo Municipal Court Judge Nicole Khoury, who was inspired to start Project iAm after friends who had children on the autism spectrum were having a hard time paying for autism treatment, most of which is not covered by insurance.

“This idea came about in 2007 when me and (Toledo musician) Dave Carpenter were talking one day and he said ‘Isn’t the name Acoustics for Autism cool? And that’s how this whole thing began,’” said Judge Khoury, who also performs in the band Arctic Clam, which is one of the acts performing at this year’s Acoustics for Autism.

“We started here in the Village Idiot with one stage and 12 acts and we raised about \$10,000 and we were able to show the world that we can have a good group of people who can come together and do good things for free,” said Judge Khoury.

“Sixteen years later, 95 bands later and eight stages later we’ve turned into one of the biggest free music events in the country and its right here in your own backyard. People ask us every single day, ‘You guys are getting so big, what more could you possibly do? You’re outgrowing Maumee.’ We will never outgrow Maumee,” said Judge Khoury, which sparked a round of applause.

To the dozens of bands that play each year at Acoustics for Autism, the event provides a great time and a way to play music for a worthy cause.

“It’s always one of our favorite shows of the year. Great cause, great crowd AND this year we get to play early so we can just drink in all the kickass bands we don’t get to see most of the year because we always gig at the same time,” said Nick Baker of the local band the Skittle Bots.

Conant Street will be closed all day Sunday to allow foot traffic in uptown Maumee. There will be shuttles going from Ye Olde Cock ‘N Bull Tavern in downtown Toledo, Jed’s in Maumee, and Draftcade in the Town Center at Levis Commons in Perrysburg throughout the festival.

For a lineup of bands, as well as information on stage location and shuttle service, visit acousticsforautism.com.