

Summer entertainment in Big Rapids generates business, vibrance

Posted by Devin Anderson on August 26th, 2015



MUSIC: Andy Kirby performs for the Pocket Park Music Series in downtown Big Rapids. (Pioneer photo/Devin Anderson)

BIG RAPIDS — Be it rock and roll, jazz, bluegrass, big band music or even a magician, there was no shortage of live entertainment this summer in Big Rapids.

Between Magic on Michigan Avenue, the Pocket Park Music Series, the Band Shell Summer Concert Series and music during this year's summer sidewalk sales, Big Rapids residents have had the chance to see more than 50 free concerts since May.

Additionally, Cranker's Brewery, Sawmill Saloon and Cleopatra's Hookah Lounge host open weekly open mic nights and Reed City, Mecosta and Evert have hosted dozens of free concerts this summer.

Magic on Michigan Avenue coordinator Kelly Quinn was raised in Big Rapids and said live music has always improved the atmosphere of the downtown area.

"Magic on Michigan has generated a lot of camaraderie among residents," she said. "Music brings passion and joy to people's hearts. That feeling is contagious and it's magnetic."

Quinn added businesses that have stayed open late for downtown events such as Magic on Michigan Avenue and the monthly Classic Car Cruise-In have seen more foot-traffic and new customers.

"We need music in this town," said Allison LeVeque, a local musician and customer service representative at Quinn's Music. "There's been big involvement from the community this summer and it's great that music has been incorporated more into the downtown area."

This Friday, Aug. 28, LeVeque and Quinn's Music guitar instructor Randy Holt will perform from noon to 2 p.m. for the Pocket Park Music Series with several of Holt's students.



The David Yonker Band performs in Pocket Park (Pioneer photo/Devin Anderson)

"Pocket Park has been crazy busy this year," she said. "Every Friday I go down, there have been lots of people. It's a good spot to hear live music."

Kha Yang, a server at the Blue Cow, said the Blue Cow has been busier on Fridays due to downtown events.

"The car show brought a lot of people in," she said. "Everyone has been really friendly."

Blue Cow owners Chuck and Connie Freiberg served food from the soon-to-open Raven Brewing outside on several Friday evenings throughout the summer to fine-tune their recipes.

"People have been coming into the Blue Cow disappointed that the Raven isn't fully open yet," Yang said.

In addition to Raven Brewing, the Old Pioneer Store, Good Dog Bakery and Artworks have stayed open later to accommodate events happening downtown.

According to Mecosta County Development Corporation President Jim Sandy, large crowds for Magic on Michigan Avenue have resulted in more visits to downtown businesses.

"The vibe these events create is positive and critical to having a good community atmosphere," Sandy said.



Mollie Weber performs a solo at the Big Rapids Community Band Shell. (Pioneer photo/Justin McKee)