

Praise in the Park to bring Christian music to Band Shell

Posted by Mary Mattingly on August 29th, 2014



GIVING PRAISE IN THE PARK: This year's event takes place at the same time as the Riverdays 46th Annual Arts and Craft show. Last year, the Dave Yonker Band played along with two other Christian bands. (Courtesy photo)

BIG RAPIDS – Local Christians will get a chance to celebrate their faith through music on Monday with the annual Praise in the Park event that takes place as a part of Riverdays.

“The idea is not only to impact Christians who want to come and be a part of the worship experience, but also to impact non-believers,” said David Yonker, the event’s coordinator. “Like people who don’t go to church and maybe have never really experienced any relationship with Christ. The goal is to constantly be letting people know God loves them.”

This is the sixth year for Praise in the Park, which will take place at the Band Shell on Monday, Sept. 1, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. David Yonker Band will play throughout that period and people are welcome to come and go to the free event.

Praise in the Park is sponsored by Gary Trimarco Chevrolet, PT Plus, Poured Out Music and Biller Insurance Agency.

This year, the event will serve as a fundraiser for Lee Johnson and his family, who owns Johnson automotive and was severely injured in an accident earlier this summer. A collection jar will be available at the performance for donations, which will add to the fund Independent Bank has been collecting the past month.

Yonker knows both Johnson and his wife through church.

“When I heard what happened, that night, God just laid on my heart, ‘Hey, let’s use this year’s Praise in the Park as a fundraiser for that family,’” Yonker said. “Any funds we raise that day will go to the Lee Johnson fund.”

The event first started as a way to bring Christian music into the community. The David Yonker Band plays in a variety of styles, some of which are original songs and some that are covers of Christian songs.

“We wanted to really allow people to get a good feel of what contemporary Christian music sounds like,” Yonker said. “I don’t know if people realize that Christian music really comes in every style out there. Whether it’s rock, country, gospel, you name it, they’re all there. We do a wide variety of styles of music. It’s something I felt God was calling me to do.”

Yonker has been a worship leader for 20 years in the area. He plays guitar and sings lead vocals in the David Yonker Band, which formed in late 2010.

While Praise in the Park used to take place on Sundays during Riverdays, it was moved to be in conjunction with the Arts and Craft show. Both will start at 10 a.m.

“Part of what we’re trying to do is take out the element of denomination,” Yonker said. “This is one of the reasons it’s not church-affiliated.”

Yonker is looking forward to once again playing for the Big Rapids community on Monday.

“Having it tied with Riverdays has been really nice,” Yonker said. “God has blessed us; it’s been wonderful. The weather has always been good and we anticipate Monday will be the same.”