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101st ANNUAL



August 20-26, 2023



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TIMES NEWS

| **LEHIGH VALLEY PRESS**

LVP

101st fair offers free admission for military

BY MARTA GOUGER

MGUGER@TNONLINE.COM

The West End Fair will kick off its 101st year Sunday with admission specials, new vendors, bands and upgrades.

Fair President Dale Greenzweig Sr. said this year all veterans and active duty servicemen will have free admission to the fair with a valid identification card.

On Tuesday, everyone who brings a coat to donate to the West End Rotary coat drive will receive \$1 off the \$8 admission fee. Guests 10 and under are admitted free of charge.

Wednesday is senior citizens day, with admission of \$4 for everyone 65 and older.

On Thursday, students are admitted for \$4 with valid identification.

Greenzweig said the fair expanded its free rides session from two hours to four hours. Free rides will be available from 2 to 6 p.m. Monday.

On Tuesday, the fair is offering a sensory time from 10 a.m. to noon for people who are sensitive to lights, sounds and commotion.

In addition to the long-standing organizations serving up favorites, there are some new offerings.

Empanadas will be served from the previous filling stand down by the craft area. "This is something new that no one else has," Greenzweig said.

Effort United Methodist Church is taking over the former St. John's Church stand located near the rides. The new menu will include panini, Reubens, chicken and ham and cheddar, corn on the cob, baked potatoes with a variety of toppings, homemade chili and hot dogs in regular and larger sizes.

This year fair goers will have a new choice for beverages. A-Treat will be the vendor, supplying most of the stands with black cherry, cream, Treat-um and ginger ale.

Greenzweig said the fair has made several site improvements. The bathrooms by the livestock have been remodeled and the kitchen has been upgraded with new paint and new lighting. Fluorescent bulbs were replaced with LED lights.

Additional lighting is being added in the parking area.

Concerts on the main stage are included with admission. On the midway, people will be able to see performances every day by the Aquatic Acrobatic Show.

Tickets are available to shows in

the arena, including the Black Cat Hell Drivers Thrill Show, two nights of demolition derbies, a junk car race, truck pulls, and the Bull Ride Mania Rodeo.

Fireworks on Sunday night will light up the sky at 9:30 p.m.

The fair is working on a kids area with tick-tack-toe and a corn box for children to play when they are tired of rides. More interactive animal offerings are planned.

Another new addition will be a 4-H livestock auction set for 10 Saturday morning.

Greenzweig said Lehigh Valley Health Network will set up a first aid station by Gate 3.

The fair runs Sunday, Aug. 20 through Saturday, Aug. 26.

Gates open at 2 p.m. daily. For events starting before 2 p.m. Gate 1 will be open.

For dropping off and picking up visitors, the fair encourages the use of Gate 3 for quicker in and out access.

Agricultural buildings are open from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday and 2 to 9 p.m. the rest of the week.

The fairgrounds are located on 570 Fairgrounds Road in Gilbert.

Visit www.westendfair.com for more information.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WEST END FAIR

Sunday

11 a.m. Quarter Midget racing

3 p.m. Opening Ceremony and Queen Ceremony, stage

3 p.m. Kids Pedal Pull, Arena Hub

4 p.m. Vesper Service, Stage

7 p.m. Cartesion Dance Academy, Band Shell

7 and 8:30 p.m. Chris Eckert, stage

9:30 p.m. Fireworks

Monday

4:15 and 5:30 p.m. Joe Bonson and Coffee Run, stage

5:30 p.m. Pleasant Valley High School Band, band shell

5:45 p.m. Party in the Pits,

arena

7 p.m. Junk Car Race, \$10, arena

7:15 and 8:30 p.m., The Cramer Brothers Band, stage

Tuesday

3 and 4:15 p.m. Josh Squared Band, stage

5 p.m. East Stroudsburg South High School Band, band shell

7 p.m. Demo Derby #1, small car, mid size, power wheels, youth class (12-15 year olds) \$10, arena

7 and 9 p.m. Whey Jennings, grandson of Waylon Jennings, stage

Wednesday

10 a.m. Antique Tractor Pull, arena

11:30 a.m. Livestock Judging, Agricultural Education Arena.

3 and 4:30 p.m. Dean Hahn and the Hawks, stage

5:30 p.m. Senior Program, stage

6 p.m. McElligot School of Irish Dance, band shell

7 p.m. Demo Derby #2 Big Car/Mini SUVs, Full Size Trucks, \$10, arena

7 and 8:30 p.m., The Steel Creek Band, stage

See **FAIR** on Page 3



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Acrobats will entertain from water-filled ring

The Aquatic Acrobatic Show will perform several shows daily at the West End Fair.

Five generations in the business, the show has traveled all around the world, including Dubai, Hong Kong, China, Hawaii, Bermuda, Bahamas

and Japan.

The one-of-a-kind show was created by Martin Alvarez.

The center stage has a 30-foot ring of water where acrobats, aerialist, jugglers, balancers, and mermaids perform routines and JetSki stunts.



Aquatic Acrobatic Show. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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FAIR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Thursday

2 and 3:30 p.m. Honky Tonk Twins, stage

6 p.m. Levels Dance Studio, band shell

8 p.m. Black Cat Hell Drivers, \$15, arena

7 and 9 p.m., Don't Back Down, Tom Petty Tribute Band, stage

Friday

3 and 4:30 p.m. Time Whys, stage

6 p.m. The Cartesien Dance Academy, band shell

6 p.m. 6200 modified 4x4,

East Coast Pro Pulling Circuit, Interstate Sanctioned Two Wheel Drive Trucks, \$10, arena

7 and 9 p.m. The Uptown Band, stage

Saturday

10 a.m. Monroe 4H Livestock Auction, livestock area

Noon Lorah's Garden Tractor Pulls, arena

2:30 and 4 p.m. Last One Standing, stage

5 p.m. wood carving auction, stage

6 p.m. Fusia Dance Center, band shell

6:30 p.m. Bull Ride Mania, \$15, arena

7 and 9 p.m., Brian Dean Moore Band, stage

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On Tuesday, fair offers sensory-friendly time

The West End Fair announces a groundbreaking initiative, the "Sensory-Friendly Morning," aimed at providing a welcoming and inclusive experience for people with sensory processing disorders.

The fair will be open from 10 a.m. to noon on Tuesday, Aug. 22, and the fairgrounds will transform into a sensory-sensitive haven, allowing everyone to participate in the joy of the event.

For people with sensory sensitivities, navigating environments filled with noise, lights, and crowds can be extremely challenging.

The West End Fair acknowledges these obstacles and strives to create an environment where everyone can fully enjoy the fair experience, regardless of their sensory needs.

During the "Sensory-Friendly Morning," specific measures will be

implemented to accommodate individuals with sensory processing disorders such as autism.

The fair will modify the rides and games, reducing sound levels and dimming or turning off lights to prevent overstimulation. Select exhibits and food stands will be open, providing ample opportunities for attendees to engage with the fair's offerings.

Additionally, visitors are encouraged to explore the livestock area to visit the animals, further enhancing the inclusive and joyful atmosphere.

The West End Fair Association is committed to ensuring that the "Sensory-Friendly Morning" fosters a sense of happiness and belonging for all attendees.

By embracing inclusivity, the fair aims to create memories and experiences that will be cherished by people of all abilities.



JOE BONSON AND COFFEE RUN

Nashville Recording artist Joe Bonson will return to the West End Fair stage at 4:15 and 5:30 p.m. Monday, Aug. 21 with his blend of Honky Tonk and country. The band has opened for Tracey Byrd and Confederate Railroad. Bonson and Coffee Run received national airplay with their recording of "Jesus and Bartenders." TIMES NEWS FILE PHOTO

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STEELCREEK PLAYING SOME NEW FAVORITES

SteelCreek, a six-member band in the Lehigh Valley, plays modern country cover songs with some classics and rock 'n' roll mixed in. The band will play at 7 and 8:30 p.m. Wednesday.

AUGUST 20-26, 2023

WWW.THEWESTENDFAIR.COM



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- **Tuesday \$1.00 Off admission with donation to the rotary club**
- **Senior Citizen Wednesday 65 and over \$4.00 admission**
- **Student Day Thursday \$4.00 with a student ID**

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See you next year! August 19th-25th 2024

Next West End Fair queen will be crowned Aug. 20

BY STACI L. GOWER
TNEEDITOR@TNONLINE.COM

Brianna Shupp and Sophia Alcamo will end their reign as the 2022 West End Fair Queen and Princess, respectively, when this year's queen and/or princess is crowned on Sunday, Aug. 20 at 3 p.m. at the fair.

Two young women between the age of 16 and 20 have filled out an application. They answered questions about their hobbies, education and involvement in the fair.

The program began in 2015 and its purpose is to promote agriculture and tourism, as well as help develop these young ladies' leadership skills," said Krista Wawrzynski, lead coordinator for the program and the 2015 Fair Queen.

The applicants wrote an essay on why the fair is important to the community and then gave a speech on why you should attend the West End Fair in front of judges that are from outside of Monroe County, Wawrzynski said.

The queen gets a \$1,000 scholarship and the princess gets a \$500

scholarship after completing their year. The money is for higher education costs, such as tuition and books.

Shupp and Alcamo have learned a great deal about the people in this community, as well as themselves.

"I have learned that cultural appreciation is a big part throughout my reign," said Shupp, who will be senior at Pleasant Valley and wants to be an anesthesiologist.

"Fairs often celebrate local traditions, customs, and cultural heritage. Through my year as fair queen, I have gained a deeper appreciation for my community's culture, traditions, and history. I have learned about different cultural practices, engaged with diverse communities, and fostered cultural understanding and inclusivity!"

Alcamo, a student at Delaware Valley University, described herself as being shy, but this was an opportunity to come out of her shell.

"One thing that has made a big impact in my life is pushing myself out of my comfort



Brianna Shupp, West End Fair queen on left, and Sophia Alcamo, princess, at the Carbon County Fair on opening day. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

zone. Ever since I've gotten the title of fair princess, I have had to talk to new people and stand on a stage in front of people," she said. "I've learned that everything is only as scary as you make it, so it doesn't hurt to try."

Shupp's favorite part of fair week is being able to exhibit animals.

"For participants who raise and care for their animals, the opportunity to showcase their animals is often a highlight of fair week," said Shupp. "It's a chance to present their

hard work, expertise, and the results of their breeding and grooming efforts."

Fair week is an opportunity to learn about different breeds, practices in animal care and the latest advancements in the industry, she said.

During fair week, the queen and princess walk around the fair to talk to the public, get to know what the people like about the fair, attend luncheon meetings, and help with the kids' activities as well as the senior program.

See **QUEEN** on Page 12

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Bullride Mania rodeo returns to the fair

BY AMY LEAP
ALEAP@TNONLINE

Bull riders and barrel racers are coming to the West End Fair.

The action-packed show and children's rodeo show will help to wrap up the fair Saturday night.

If you have never watched a rodeo or participated in one, you might be missing out, according to the owners of Bullride Mania.

The rodeo is owned by the Kennard family, based out of Fredonia. Their motto is, "Bringing the West to the East since 1969 to bring the finest family entertainment," said Donna Kennard.

Bullride Mania travels the country setting up rodeos for real cowboys that compete over all the country.

Kennard said many of

them have been competing at rodeos since they were young and worked up the ladder to finally ride the big bulls.

The bull ride is completed either when the bull rider has met the eight-second requirement by using only one hand or has been bucked off.

Bull riders who are still in control when the eight-second buzzer sounds must dismount, getting off the bull as safely as possible.

The cowboys riding the big bulls are brave, but the clowns also play a major role in the rodeo.

The clowns are not only there to be funny, but to distract a bull if it is charging at a rider that was bucked off or injured.

The clowns are either referred to as rodeo clowns or barrel men, and they play a very im-



Bullride Mania's show will be at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 26 in the Main Arena. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

portant role during each performance.

A clown's job is to keep the crowd entertained throughout slower moments of the rodeo.

Barrelmen often will tag-team with the rodeo's

bullfighters, distracting the bulls after each ride to allow the cowboys to safely exit the arena.

Bull Ride Mania starts at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 26 at the Main Arena.

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Eckert to emcee, play gospel, country music

West End favorite Chris Eckert will be returning to the West End Fair stage on opening day, Sunday, Aug. 20 with shows at 7 and 8:30 p.m.

The first show will follow the vesper service and be mainly gospel and inspirational music. The second show will feature classic country music

with hits from such stars as Johnny Cash (Folsom Prison Blues), Merle Haggard (Mama Tried), Conway Twitty (Hello Darlin'), George Strait (The Fireman) just to name a few

He'll continue as the emcee of the Main Stage for the rest of the fair.

Eckert has played the fair and festival circuit

this summer, including the West End Firemen's Fair, the Plainfield Farmers Fair, the Tioga County Fair (tonight), as well as the Greene-Dreher-Sterling Fair, the Kettle Creek Music Festival in Clinton County, the Cookport Fair in Indiana County, the North of 80 Music Festival in the near future.



Chris Eckert

Honky Tonk Twins to showcase classic country songs

BY JIM RADENHAUSEN
TNEDITOR@TNONLINE

The Honky Tonk Twins will perform music well beyond the duo's years during its West End Fair debut Aug. 24 in Gilbert.

Hailing from Frederick, Maryland, the Twins' Jessica Snyder and Willie Barry are set to play classic country at 2, 3:30 and 5 p.m. on the Main Stage. Snyder turns 29 in September, with Barry having done so in July.

"I've always been an old soul," said Snyder, a singer since she could talk. "While I can sing along with nearly anything country and plenty of other genres, I have always preferred the country-western classics."

Growing up, Snyder's influences included the likes of Loretta Lynn, Dolly Parton, Connie Smith and Lane Brody. Snyder, who also loves various southern gospel groups, spent time with "Aunt Connie" and "Auntie Lane" as a child at carnivals, fairs and other events.

"I always loved that Connie would pull me up to sit on her lap as she signed autographs," Snyder said. Brody and her husband, she added, once

brought Snyder and family backstage at the Grand Ole Opry to watch from the on-stage pews.

Snyder's family was also close with Kelly Lang. Snyder "grew up singing to her CDs and trying to practice the runs and vocalizations she did in order to grow my own voice."

Other influences include local artists Snyder grew up around, including Anita Stapleton and Nancy Wiles, the latter "who has always been my biggest mentor."

Snyder, also an actress, realized she wanted to pursue her passion as a career when singing at churches and in her first gospel concert at age 12. She started recording her first album, 2010's "Simply Singin' Praise," at 14.

After Dave Powers, Snyder's duet partner in Cross-N-Country, passed away in 2022, Barry agreed to form a new act with Snyder. Barry, who had filled in for Powers when he suffered a stroke, named the new duo.

Given their ages, taste in older/classic music, same hometown, tight harmonies and playful stage presence, "we



The Honky Tonk Twins CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

thought the term 'Twins' fit us pretty well," Snyder said.

The Twins, Snyder said, will perform some solo songs at the fair, and perhaps some rockabilly or oldies. However, "we make sure to mix in great duets from Dolly and Porter, Loretta and Conway, Tammy and George, and more."

With two solo albums to her credit, Snyder hopes to record Christmas, country and gospel records. Furthermore, she and Barry may record an album at some point.

Snyder, who considers every booking a career highlight, also regards making her first album as a high point. Other highlights include: starting her

entertainment business Fawned Of Music LLC; winning, with one of her original songs, the local-level Country Showdown in her early 20s; and starting to play carnivals and fairs in 2022.

As for what Snyder wants to accomplish, "I'm not looking for huge fame and glory. I have always hoped that one day I would have the opportunity to sing on the Grand Ole Opry."

Whether or not her Opry dream comes to fruition, Snyder wants "to be happy and make a decent living off of what I love doing. Singing, entertaining, spreading joy and bringing back memories to my audiences. That's what it's all about."

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Josh Squared Band returns to West End

BY JIM RADENHAUSEN
TNEDITOR@TNONLINE

The West End Fair will get a double dose of "Josh" when The Josh Squared Band hits the Main Stage in Gilbert for sets at 3 and 4:15 p.m. Aug. 22.

The central Pennsylvania band, performing various genres from the 1940s up through contemporary hits, first performed at the fair in 2017.

The Josh Squared Band's current lineup features Josh Tindall on vocals and keyboard, Josh Duma on bass and saxophone, Kali Rodgers on vocals, Misti Layser on drums and Brian Levering on guitar. Other musicians join the band for special occasions.

"I believe my wife coined the term 'Josh Squared' originally at a cookout," Duma said, adding that he and Tindall also perform as a duo, under the moniker Josh Squared or The Joshes.

Before forming the duo in 2015 and the band in 2016, Duma and Tindall — both residing in Elizabethtown — had worked together in various groups since summer 2007. Duma's passion for music, he noted, started in high school.

"The energy of performing in front of a crowd drew me in. I've been hooked ever since. I was lucky growing up in a place where I could experience and enjoy many styles and artists, from jazz, rock, R&B, funk and country."

Born in Nevada, Duma grew up in New York's Catskill Mountains. As a bassist, "the Red Hot Chili Peppers, James Brown and Parliament Funkadelic were all part of my younger musical exploration," said Duma, who relocated to Pennsylvania after college.

"My mom would listen

to '50s and '60s radio as we drove around," he continued, "and I would pick up on classic Motown and early rock 'n' roll. I also spent a lot of time listening to jazz records from various saxophonists, as my first musical instrument was saxophone."

Though the group, which has played Musikfest in Bethlehem for many years, recorded some videos in recent years, "we have not released an official recording together," Duma noted. "Who knows what the future might hold?"

For now, the band revels in the live-shows experience and fans' enjoyment.

"The highlight of being a musician," Duma said, "is performing for crowds week after week. Getting to live as an entertainer across the state of Pennsylvania, Atlantic City, Wildwood, Toledo, Ocean City and more. We want you to dance, celebrate and have a better day because you saw our show."



From left: Brian Levering, Mitsi Layser, Josh Tindall, Kali Rodgers and Josh Duma. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

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Old Tyme Equipment on display at fair

Pocono Old Tyme Equipment Association shows how things were done on the farm. Visit the new museum building on the fairgrounds.

The purpose of this association is to promote the interest of the public in the preservation, restoration and education of antique tractors, engines, implements and toys.

Come out and see the equipment of yesteryear — belted equipment, old tractors, threshing demonstrations, feed grinders and this year they are also featuring garden tractors.

Interested in the club? Meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at the West End Fairgrounds at 7:30 p.m. in the new museum building meeting room. For information visit the club's Facebook page.



Dean Hartshorn of Bartonsville shows off his two red antique Work Horse tractors and the larger antique work tractor. PHOTOS BY AMY LEAP/TIMES NEWS

QUEEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

"I will be able to show (the new queen) around the fairground and make sure she is comfortable," said Shupp. "I will give her some tips on what I have learned through my year."

Fair attendees will see the queen selling 50/50 tickets Monday through Saturday. Proceeds from these tickets benefit the Fair Queen program.

They are planning to host a gift card bingo and try some other fundraising opportunities to help continue to grow the program, said Wawrzynski.

State Sen. Rosemary Brown provided a donation that will help cov-

er the cost of one meal per day for the fair queen and/or princess.

When the fair concludes, the young ladies will attend various events throughout the year to promote the fair, agriculture and tourism.

"My favorite thing I did as fair princess was definitely meeting new people at different events and interacting with our community. It's such an honor to represent the fair that means so much to so many people," Alcamo said.

They attended events such as a car show at Mrs. Bush's Personal Care Home, Stroudsburg St. Patrick's Day Parade, Chestnuthill Township's Trunk-or-Treat, Farm Animal Frolic at Quiet Valley, the West End Fireman's Festival and the West End Car Show and the Carbon County Fair.

Shupp's favorite event was going to Hershey to compete for Pennsylvania State Fair Queen against 58 other contestants.

"Even though the beginning of the trip was nerve wracking, I had confidence in myself that I was going to do my best and make my fair and family proud," Shupp said.

Although she did not win, she says she walked away with many lessons and lifelong friends.

She and the other contestants were taught that "you came in this competition as a queen and you leave still a queen," she said. "This message has stuck with me since the competition because no matter what the outcome is in any situation you will learn to adapt and succeed no matter a winner or a loser."



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Black Cat drivers bring rolls, flames, thrills

BY AMY LEAP

ALEAP@TNONLINE.COM

The Black Cat Hell Drivers Stunt Show is coming to the West End Fair this year.

If you like the thrill of Hollywood-style car crashes and precision driving, high speed reverse spins, ramp to ramp changes, be sure to check them out.

Come prepared for the thrill and excitement of drivers who defy gravity and cars bursting into flames while the driver tries to escape the blazing inferno.

Johnny Wisner, creator of the Black Cat Hell Drivers, along with Chris Morena, world record stuntman, travel across the country, and are known for their nail-biting and edge-of-your-seat show.

A soft-spoken man from California, Wisner wanted to be a race-car driver but recalls that as a kid, it would take him forever to get up the nerve to try out a scary new ride. Then, after he overcame that initial fear and took his first plunge, all he wanted to do was just keep taking that same ride.

When he got to Lincoln, Nebraska, Wisner saw a poster for King Kovaz Auto Daredevils thrill show.

To get a start in the business, he got a job selling tickets in front of a ride for \$7 a day, and on the last day of the fair, when the thrill show arrived, he asked the owner for a job.



Black Cat Hell Drivers will perform at 8 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 24 in the Main Arena. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Kovaz told him to come back when he turned 21, and one year later, Wisner did just that.

Wisner was asked where he got the name for his show. "I saw in one magazine a slogan Hell Drivers and I decided to name my show the Black Cat Hell Riders."

After growing up watching shows such as "Dukes of Hazzard," "Knight Rider" and "The Fall Guy" Morena looked up to the guys performing the action and stunts. Years later he met some local stuntmen in New York who invited him to training sessions performing high falls, stunt fighting, fire burns, stunt driving and more.

In 1996 he was asked to join "The Hollywood Stunt Show," a touring thrill show that mostly included stunt driving and car crashes.

He moved to Orlando, Florida, in 2004 to help open and drive full time for "Lights, Motors, Action Extreme Stunt Show" at Disney World.

Morena performed at Charlotte Motor Speedway, jumping a car towing a house trailer for a World Record of 160 feet in front of over 90,000 spectators.

The Black Cat Hell Drivers pride themselves on keeping an American tradition alive that dates back to 1934.

"I think we are such a

popular attraction at fairs is because we provide the thrills that gets the spectators adrenaline going," Wisner said.

The 70-minute show includes classic thrill show stunts, including multi-car precision stunt driving; two-wheel stunt driving; Hollywood-style car crashes; high speed reverse spins; motorcycle stunts, a thrill show clown, a 1937 Dodge sedan jump ramp to ramp and flames.

The Black Cat Hell Drivers will appear at 8 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 24 in the Main Area,

Tickets are \$15 for general admission seats.

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Tom Petty tribute band isn't 'backing down'

BY JIM RADENHAUSEN
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Don't Back Down will celebrate the music of Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers during an appearance Aug. 24 on the West End Fair's Main Stage in Gilbert.

The tribute act, set for shows at 7 and 9 p.m., will play material from Petty's 41-year career. The singer-songwriter's catalog includes 13 studio albums with The Heartbreakers, three solo albums, and two albums each with Mudcrutch and The Traveling Wilburys.

Mark O'Dell, Don't Back Down guitarist and lead vocalist, hopes fans sing along, as "hearing people sing makes the show for me."

Formed in 2017 and based out of Baltimore, Maryland, Don't Back Down also features: Chris Huntington, lead guitar; Jeremy Robinson, bass and vocals; Tom Sabia, drums; and Evan Cooper, keyboards and vocals. The band's influences come from various genres.

"Most, if not all, of us came from musical families," O'Dell said. "We grew up seeing perfor-

mances, hanging alongside rehearsals, traveling to venues, and were given our first instruments by our parents early on."

O'Dell and Huntington were playing together in another band in 2017, covering a handful of Petty songs. "As they always turned out to be some of our best and most well-received covers," O'Dell noted, "I would jokingly say to him we should start a tribute band."

Shortly after Petty's passing in October 2017, "We were asked to perform a few songs at a memorial show at a venue in Annapolis, Maryland," O'Dell said. During the show, the band felt the love for Petty's music.

"Maybe it was a heady mix of nostalgia, sadness and excitement all at the same time," O'Dell said. "We were hooked and decided to give it a go."

With most Petty tribute bands "fronted by a guy with long hair wearing some top hat or something," O'Dell and company wanted to differentiate itself from the crowd. Rather, the band focused less on a look-alike experience and chose a name to reflect a call to



Don't Back Down, a Tom Petty tribute band, will perform at 7 and 9 p.m. Aug. 24.

action.

"We wanted to remind people to celebrate the things they love," O'Dell said. "To stand up for things they believe in, as Tom Petty did. Not to listen when someone tells you that you can't do something, to take a stand when you feel you must. You know, Don't Back Down."

The band, whose name references Petty's 1989 hit "I Won't Back Down," has recorded 30-plus Petty songs, five live performance sessions and 14 tribute videos. The act will debut an original song, "Winding Roads," next month at a charity event in Maryland.

"This song is influ-

enced by the Byrds and longtime friend of Tom Petty, Roger McGuinn," O'Dell said.

When considering Don't Back Down's career highlights thus far, O'Dell recalls one fondly.

"Performing in front of the U.S. Capitol Building for a crowd of over 17,000 people at the finish line of the D.C. Rock 'n' Roll Marathon this past spring. That was pretty rad. Cold and windy, but rad."

As for the band's goals, "If we can continue to, in some small way, keep the music of Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers alive in the hearts of fans and budding rock musicians alike, that would be just fine with us."

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TimeWhys steps back to the '60s and beyond

BY JIM RADENHAUSEN
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Sounds of the 1960s through 1980s will fill The West End Fair's Main Stage in Gilbert when TimeWhys performs sets at 3 and 4:30 p.m. Aug. 25.

"The band has a love for The Beatles, so we are deeply rooted in the '60s and '70s sound," said Tom Drago, TimeWhys keyboardist and lead vocalist. The group's repertoire includes acts such as the Bee Gees, The Grass Roots, The Foundations, The Cyrkle and The Doors.

Based in the Lehigh Valley, TimeWhys also features Drago's brother Frank on keyboards, bass and vocals. Mark Johnson, on guitar and vocals, and John Nigrelli, on drums and vocals, round out the lineup.

The band's multi-instrumentalist members use technology to reproduce sound that would take six or eight musicians to replicate, Drago noted. The group reproduces "intricate details of the original performances. You should hear these songs as you remember them."

TimeWhys, Drago said, "is the modern-day version of the band Otherside from the late 1980s/early 1990s. The same four musicians have been together for many years. In the '90s, we did songs from the then-current Billboards



TimeWhys will play twice on Aug. 25, at 3 and 4:30 p.m. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

charts."

As Otherside, the band had original songs on local FM radio stations such as WLEV, WAEB, and WPST in New Jersey, and supported 1960s group The Platters at a 1991 gig.

As band members grew older, more experienced and technologically savvy, "we decided to go back to our roots and do songs we loved from our childhood," Drago said. Thus, the group has performed as TimeWhys for eight years.

The name, Drago said, expresses that "our band members are 'wise' to the fact that the 'time' period of music we perform is the best music of our lifetime. We also ask ourselves 'Why' does the 'Time' have to go by so

fast? And so we became TimeWhys."

Initially, TimeWhys performed just 1960s and 1970s music. However, "as of late, we are getting requests for '80s tunes, as well," Drago said. "So we do include two or three '80s tunes," plus one-hit-wonder songs.

The band, Drago said, has tried to secure a show at The West End Fair for about three years. A Cramer Brothers recommendation helped TimeWhys land a spot on this year's schedule.

Through the years, the band has performed in the Poconos at wineries, resorts and lakes, as well as the West End Firemen's Festival. Career highlights, Drago, said, include opening for 1960s act

The Cyrkle and snaring several Best Local Band readers' choice awards. In addition, TimeWhys has performed shows during Musikfest in Bethlehem.

TimeWhys, with one EP to its credit, may record more original, band-penned music. However, Drago "can't say too much about it yet, but it will be in the same vein as the '60s to '80s music we love."

In the meantime, TimeWhys, Drago said, enjoys seeing fan reaction to band's live shows.

"Attendees of our shows often say, 'Wow, I remember that tune!' There's no better feeling than to make fans happy and bring them back to a memorable part of their lives."



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