



Rockin' For Autism kicks off inaugural music festival on April 16

April 05, 2016

To commemorate Autism Awareness Month, and raise awareness of and funds for autism research, the Town of Fanwood will be hosting its first annual Rockin' For Autism Music Festival on Saturday, April 16, 2016, from 10:00am to 5:00pm at LaGrande Park. The all-day festival will feature a variety of local musical acts, food trucks, local vendors, autism workshops and clinics, an obstacle course, a bake sale and raffles, and will coincide with the Scotch Plains Fanwood Youth Baseball Association Opening Day Ceremony.



All proceeds will be donated to Autism NJ, the largest statewide network of parents and professionals dedicated to improving lives of individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Those wishing to donate online may do so at <https://www.crowdrise.com/rockin-for-autism-2016/fundraiser/rockinforautism2016>.

The festival is the brainchild of 14-year-old Fanwood resident Mallory Banks, who since 2011 has raised more than \$10,000 for Autism NJ in honor of her brother Ethan (16) and all those affected by autism spectrum disorder. Miss Banks, an Autism Awareness Junior Ambassador, ranks among the top kids in New Jersey who raised money for Autism Awareness Month.

"For the past few years, I've had a lot of success in raising funds for autism awareness by hosting bake sales and raffles. This year I wanted to do something bigger and better, and get more of the community involved," said Mallory, who conceived of the festival while recovering from spinal surgery last year. "The Rockin' For Autism music festival is like a dream come true, and I am so excited that our mayor and so many local bands and businesses have committed to helping me raise funds for autism awareness."

In 2015, Mallory approached Fanwood Mayor Colleen Mahr during the town's annual Fannywood Day celebration and pitched her idea for hosting a music festival in La Grande Park. Since then, Mayor Mahr has been working closely with Mallory; her parents, Jeff and Gina Banks; and local government agencies to help facilitate the event. In 2014, the Fanwood Borough Council honored then 12-year-old Mallory for raising \$3,500 for autism awareness, and proclaimed June 17 to be Mallory Banks Day.

"Mallory Banks is an extraordinary girl, whose passion for raising awareness for autism is truly inspirational and sets an example for others to follow. I am honored to be able to support her efforts and applaud her deep commitment to community advocacy," said Mayor Mahr. "With Everything that the Rockin' For Autism has to offer, I am confident that the annual festival will exceed expectations in terms of raising awareness and funds, and will have a long-lasting, positive benefit for Fanwood as

well."

Among the many musical acts scheduled perform include Goodworks, Three-Piece Nugget, Broadcaster, Leave the Gun, The Jeff Birns Band and Eric Harrison's Crash Course. The event will be MC'd by Main Source DJs.

Many local businesses and organizations have also pledged to support the festival, including: Nick's Pizza & Deli, Fanwood Bagels & Deli and Frank's Auto Repair in Fanwood; GrillStone, Rich Tric Photography, Temple Sholom and The JCC of Central NJ in Scotch Plains; The MAX Challenge and Cesar Kai Academy in Cranford; Cindy Smith Dance Studio in Garwood; Main Source DJs in Woodbridge; and New Jersey American Water in Voorhees.

The festival will also coincide with the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Youth Baseball Association's annual opening day ceremony. Fanwood Mayor Coleen Mahr will throw the ceremonial first pitch to commence the 2016 SPFYBA baseball season. In addition, the Wolves Basketball Academy will also run clinics on the basketball courts, and the Scotch Plains-Fanwood Soccer Association will organize impromptu games during the event.

The event will also feature a variety of autism clinics, including workshops by Jammin' Jenn, which has been using music therapy to connect with special needs children and adults since 2009. Autism New Jersey and Children's Specialized Hospital will also partake in spreading awareness.

http://www.nj.com/suburbannews/index.ssf/2016/04/rockin_for_autism_kicks_off_in.html