

Entertainment

Folk society turns 25

Saturday, June 7, 2014

The East River Folk Society will celebrate 25 years of open mic coffeehouses in the Downriver area on June 14.

And exactly how will they celebrate? With an open mic, of course.

That's what they already do every month from September through June.

It's a celebration of music that began in 1989 and moved to its present day home, First Presbyterian Church in Wyandotte, when the gatherings outgrew the venue on Grosse Ile.

What started as a gathering of friends with a shared love of music eventually became a non-profit and has operated as such ever since.

"Our purpose is to provide a venue for aspiring musicians to gain experience performing for live audiences," said current ERFS President Rick Pitts. "In doing that we also provide an inexpensive, informal entertainment option for the community, where they can hear some really excellent musical performances.

The group also has held fundraisers for different causes through the years, including an annual fundraiser for the Wyandotte Goodfellows.

In contrast to similar open mic events in the area, the focus is on the music — there's no competition from noisy cappuccino machines, conversation or board games.

Audiences are unfailingly attentive, polite and receptive to a wide variety of performers with varying degrees of ability, members said. A capable audio system is utilized for sound reinforcement, assuring an optimum listening experience.

The folk society draws performers from all over the metropolitan Detroit area. Musicians not only perform but also use the opportunity to network and develop connections with other musicians.

According to Pitts: "Musical partnerships take hold and lead people in directions they wouldn't have taken otherwise. Several performers have recorded their music and found musicians to back them up through contacts developed through the folk society."

The East River Folk Society will hold its 25-year celebratory coffee-house June 17 in the fellowship hall of the First Presbyterian Church of Wyandotte, 2250 Oak St. The music starts at 7 p.m.; performers must sign in by 6:45 p.m.

The general public is always invited to attend. Admission is \$3 for members and \$5 for all others.

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