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Blacksmith Project hosts ‘Concert for Hunger’

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Local

CRYSTAL LAKE – The Blacksmith Project will host a “Concert for Hunger” at the **Raue Center** for the Arts on Saturday to benefit the Crystal Lake Food Pantry. The Blacksmith Project, an organization that mentors and promotes Christian musical artists in the area, gathered 17 musicians of different genres and ages to perform at the free concert.

“It’s the best of both worlds,” project co-founder Mark Filippi said. “Our artists get the chance to go out and do their music while helping people at the same time.”

The concert begins at 7 p.m., and doors opening at 6 p.m. A collection basket for the pantry will be passed around halfway through the concert. Credit card machines and food donation bins will be available in the lobby. All of the proceeds will go to the pantry, Filippi said.

“We ask that people come prepared to give if they are able to,” Filippi said. “But if they can’t, just come out to see the concert. It’s going to be a great night of music.”

Duncan Mathieson, the organization’s other co-founder, said he always felt a calling to feed the hungry. So when The Blacksmith Project decided to host a concert to aid a charitable foundation, the Crystal Lake Food Pantry was deemed a good fit.

“We believe in expressing our faith by serving,” Mathieson said. “Food pantries are important because they fulfill a very basic and urgent need in the community.”

Catherine Williams, president of the board of directors of the Crystal Lake Food Pantry, reported a 70 percent increase in the past two years in the number of people using the pantry.

In addition to raising funds for the Crystal Lake Food Pantry, the concert also will try to bring awareness to the issue of hunger in the community. Bags will be handed out after the event to encourage and remind people to continue donating to food pantries across the county.

“There are kids who can’t perform well in school because they always come to class hungry,” Williams said.

“Their parents are worried about making money just to buy the basics,” Williams said.

Williams said she was grateful to the residents of Crystal Lake who had helped increase the number of donations in 2009 by about 50 percent from the year before. But despite this increase, the pantry still is struggling to keep up with demand, she said.

“The issue of hunger has a huge impact on our community,” Williams said. “The face of the people coming to the pantry today is the face of the community. We need continuing help to meet the crushing demand.”

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