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Memorial concert raises funds for scholarship

By COURTNEY CROWDER - ccrowder@lakecountyjournal.com

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In the early evening of Aug. 20, the people enjoying the summer weather in Grayslake's Central Park heard an unfamiliar but surprisingly enjoyable noise.

They were hearing the beautiful tones of the jazz music being played to celebrate the life of Drew Chapin and raise money for the scholarship in his name.

The free concert honored Chapin, who passed away in 2005, and who loved music, parks and jazz improvisation.

The memorial concert was played by a mix of students and professionals who improvised on blues, swing and Latin jazz standards. Drew's parents, Bill and Amy, both organized the concert and performed in it, Bill Chapin played the Jazz piano and Amy Chapin sang.



Amy Chapin – mother of Drew Chapin – sings while the band made up of Bill Chapin, Drew Chapin's father, Paul Nielsen and Tony Dussone play along. Drew Chapin lost his life while riding his bicycle in 2005. The concert was a fundraiser for a scholarship in Drew Chapin's name. (Photo by Mary Neely)

"The event went phenomenally," Bill Chapin said. "It was a great turn out in the number of people who came to the event."

Music has always been part of the culture of Chapin's family and so his parents believed that a musical event was the best way to honor him.

"Ever since he was tiny he has been playing or singing," Amy Chapin said. "When he died he knew how to play the piano, guitar and drums."

Despite his love for music, Chapin also was interested in the different languages and cultures the world had to offer.

"It looked as if Drew was going to go into a humanitarian job," Bill Chapin said.

Amy Chapin agreed, "Drew wanted to understand as many cultures as he possibly could. He saw music and recreation as the international language."

Four years ago, Chapin was a 21 year-old college student studying at Hanover College in Indiana when he was hit by a car. It was early in the afternoon, when a sleeping driver ran off the road and struck Chapin while he was bike-riding.

"Because of what happened to our family, we try to educate people that a tired driver is just as bad as a drunk driver," Amy Chapin said.

The event attracted both people who knew the family as well as passers-by who heard the music.

Mary Neely, a friend of the family, enjoyed the jam session very much.

"It was a great mix of professional musicians and up-and-coming young jazz artists from Lake County," Neely said. "Others in the crowd seemed to be having a great time, too. There was wonderful diversity in the audience ,and the children seemed to like the music as much as their parents did."

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- I don't think we should change the current system.
- I think we need radical reform.
- I think we should have universal health care.
- I think our government should concentrate on other issues right now.
- I have no opinion on this issue.

Having the event and the scholarship has been a source of healing for the Chapins.

"What happened is every parents worst nightmare, but the having scholarship has helped," Bill Chapin said. "This is allowing us to redefine the anniversary from one of sadness to one of healing."

The event was so successful that it raised the total amount needed for this year's scholarship.

"Because this event was so successful, we hope that this becomes an annual thing," Bill Chapin said. "We had a lot of fun playing, and I know that Drew would have loved every minute of it."



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