

Lake Style

Dining, Arts & Entertainment



The Boston-based male vocal group Five O'Clock Shadow will perform during the first of two concerts hosted by Temple B'nai Israel this year. (Courtesy photo)

LACONIA★TEMPLE LEVERAGING MUSIC★TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

BY ADAM DRAPCHO
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — What started out as a night of dinner and entertainment for Temple B'nai Israel has turned into a significant windfall for local nonprofits. This year's "We Care" concerts will feature the Boston-based premier vocal group Five O'Clock Shadow on May 23 and, on Oct. 24, Hollywood legend John Davidson. The concerts will benefit local nonprofits The Bridge House, in Plymouth, and Meredith Altrusa.

Barbara Katz, marketing chair for Temple B'nai Israel, said the "We Care" tradition, now in its eighth year, was born after the temple threw a small party at Pitman's Freight Room, intended for just members of the congregation. It was a hit. The music was great, and ticket sales more than covered costs.

"The next year, they said, well, if we can do this, maybe we can help other people, other organiza-

tions," Katz said. "It just sort of blossomed from there. We realized we have a formula, we can get the talent, we get them at a price that is good for us to get the maximum profit for the community."

She said there's a concept in Judaism known as "tzedakah," which she interpreted as "to give back, to do good works. It's central to what we believe." And so, a series of concerts to benefit local charities was a natural fit for the temple.

It proved to be a hit with the general community, too. Over the first eight years, the concerts have raised nearly \$100,000 for local nonprofits. The grants have ranged from around \$10,000 up to \$30,000, and for the small organizations they partner with, that money goes a long way.

The first concert of this year, Five O'Clock Shadow on May 23, will benefit The Bridge House in Plymouth, a 20-plus bed facility that provides emergency shelter, food and other services to more than 175 individuals and families each year, with

specialized services for veterans.

Cathy Bentwood, director of The Bridge House, said this will be the first time that her organization will benefit from one of the temple's concerts.

"They knew about our commitment to serving rough-living veterans, asked us if we would like to be part of their giving, we jumped at the opportunity," Bentwood said. She said the support from the concert will be used as part of their operational budget, specifically their efforts to prevent homelessness.

It is a challenge to lift a person or family out of homelessness, but often that crisis could have been prevented with a modest, one-time assistance. Families living on an economic fringe can be upset by something as mundane as a flat tire. If the family can't afford a new tire, they might miss work, then be unable to pay bills on time, and weeks later that one-time misfortune has snowballed to the point

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that the family is evicted from their home.

Bentwood said her organization can step in with a

by compassion, something that the temple and The Bridge House share, Bentwood

to be, staff works very hard to be non-judgmental," Bentwood said. "Compassion is what we try to

tions of local nonprofits to be considered for the concert series. She said that she had been aware of The Bridge

In addition to revenue from the tickets, Bentwood said, the partner organization is also challenged to embark upon a social media fundraising campaign leading up to the concert. "That's kind of grown, along with doing just the concert... So that really boosts the funds."

The concerts are held in the Inter-Lakes Community Auditorium in Meredith. There are 400 seats in the space, and while the temple hasn't yet sold out a concert, they've gotten closer and closer as their concert series has gained momentum.

"We do hope that we can fill the auditorium," Katz said. "It's a great joy to see it making a difference in our community. We're anxious to get this year rolling and see where it takes us."



Jason Anick Acoustic Trio in concert

LACONIA — Taylor Community's 2020 Concert Series sponsored by Bank of New Hampshire continues Sunday, March 8, at 3 p.m. with the Jason Anick Acoustic Trio. The event will be in the Woodside Building and is free and open to the public. Fiddle, guitar and bass is a traditional combination. But when Jason Anick, Max O'Rourke and Greg Loughman play, they offer a new brand of acoustic music, with traditional instrumentation, catchy melodies, and the wit and spontaneity of musical storytellers. For more information, visit taylorcommunity.org, or call 603-524-5600.



Five O'Clock Shadow thanks the crowd at last year's We Care concert. (Courtesy photo)

one-time grant to help that family get back in good financial standing. "It's really important to us to meet our prevention goals."

The "We Care" outreach is driven

said.

"The organization's philosophy is grounded in mutual respect and self-esteem, we treat everybody as they are and the person they would like

uphold every day, and understanding that the people we work with are doing the best they can."

Each year, Katz said, the temple surveys its members for sugges-

House, but didn't truly understand the value of their work until the committee visited the shelter.

"I never really knew what it was, now I know," she said.



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