



A Music Festival With a Mission

by Cindy Lempke

There is a special kind of magic that brings the Mountain Music Fest to life. It is a unique mixture of a first-class concert experience, a student-driven production, a carnival-like atmosphere of activities, food and drink vendors, and an artisan market. At the heart of this outstanding community fundraiser is the mission of its presenter, the Wooden Hawk Foundation, a nonprofit that invests in local students by helping them explore the full range of future educational and career paths.

"The Mountain Music Fest is the fundraising arm of Wooden Hawk," said Foundation Founder Michele Vanags. "It supports our purpose of educating students about all the possibilities available to them after high school. We provide information and resources to allow students to create their own narrative, whether that be attending a four-year college, community college, pursuing a trade, entering the military or taking a gap year. The goal is to give them a foundation for a happy and fulfilling life."

Showcasing Student Art and Activities

According to Vanags, a key objective of the music festival is to promote stronger connections between students and the community. Student-led booths promoting their clubs and sports organizations will give attendees the chance to learn more about the interests of today's high school students. Youth will be engaging participants in fun activities while sharing stories about their clubs and teams, and accepting donations to support their endeavors.

New to the festival this year is an artisan market coordinated by volunteer Jen Pearson, a local Evergreen artist. Youth will be selling their crafts next to professional artists, fostering a spirit of entrepreneurship and serving as guides to the marketing and sales aspects of art as a business.

Musical Acts Bring Talent and Inspiration to the Stage

The Mountain Music Fest is establishing a reputation for presenting a high-quality concert experience. Creating the music line-up for the festival was achieved through a lot of research not only about bands' performances but also their back stories. Vanags and Foundation President Pam Lush-Lindquist listened to countless selections from bands spanning many musical genres. When it came time to make choices, they had a few criteria in mind.

"We're focused on growing the caliber of musical talent at MMF to not only give our community a show on par with what they

might see at a venue like Fiddlers Green but more importantly to provide students with real world experiences they wouldn't otherwise have access to," said Lindquist. "It's about building something extraordinary that puts students at the center of it all."

"We wanted to have music to suit everyone's tastes from hip hop to country to Indie," Lindquist adds. "We also seek to involve bands that have compassion for what we are doing and who are willing to share their stories with our students. Hearing about how artists overcame challenges to pursue their passion in the highly saturated music industry can be inspirational for our youth."

"As an Evergreen native and EHS graduate, I'm incredibly excited to be returning to my hometown with a special band consisting of my longtime musical collaborator, Sam Grisman, as well as my siblings, Sam, Gina Leslie, and my wife, Phoebe Hunt," said Dominick Leslie. "Fresh off a Red Rocks performance in May with Molly Tuttle, and multiple Grammy wins, I couldn't be prouder to present this unique ensemble at the Mountain Music Fest."



The stage came alive with Firefall's closing performance last year.

Here's the schedule of performers:

Non-Propheet (12-12:30 pm) A band of students from the Morrison-Conifer area, who are returning to the festival after taking top honors a second year in a row among 19 acts in Conifer's Got Talent.

Hand Turkey Band (1:15-2:00 pm) Invited back to the festival by popular demand, Hand Turkey Band delivers a fresh take on classic funk, soul and pop.

YAN YEZ (2:45-3:30 pm) an India Post-Pop band from Denver named by Westword magazine as a band to watch.

Christie Huff (4:15-5:00 pm) Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter Christie Huff will take the stage with her blend of country music with a pop-soul edge.

Flobots (5:45-6:45 pm) One of two headline acts, an alternative hip hop band from Denver that's on a mission to create community and ignite activism.

Sam Grisman Project with The Leslies (7:30-9 pm) Performers who deliver intimate, high-energy versions of songs ranging from Jerry Garcia to Bob Dylan.

Festival tickets are available in advance for \$25. Event day tickets are \$30. Youth tickets for ages 6-18 are \$10 (onsite only). Children under 6 years old receive free admission.

Students Given the Reins to Gain Real-World Skills

By design, local students are at the helm of the Mountain Music Fest, leading all aspects of the event including stage production, sponsor recruitment, marketing, parking and venue logistics. They are mentored by professionals with expertise in these areas so that they walk away from the festival with practical knowledge and inspiration for their future.

"The idea of the festival is 'for the students by the students,'" said Vanags. "One of our student coordinators, Waylon Keane, is a rising sophomore at Conifer High School (CHS) who handled stage production for Conifer's Got Talent. One of our headliners, the Flobots, requested a day-of assistant and Waylon will fulfill that role. He'll get the chance to shadow stage manager Andy Potter and the opportunity to assist Mountain West Production Group, a leading Denver production company, on light and sound. Who knows how that experience may influence his career path."

Waylon is on the festival team with Evergreen High School's (EHS) Xavier Gomez, who stepped up to manage the parking system, and Mac Barber, a recent graduate of CHS and future U.S. Marine Corp enlistee, who is the festival co-emcee with former Kansas City professional broadcaster and Evergreen resident Steve Physioc. Other key members of the festival team are EHS rising senior and student assistant event coordinator Claire Naumer and festival lead organizer Maddie Graham, a recent graduate of the University of Colorado's Leeds School of Business.

Graham is grateful for the practical experience she's gaining from the festival, which goes beyond the theoretical lessons of her business marketing curriculum. She also appreciates the larger mission of Mountain Music Fest to help students explore options after high school.

"I believe in the cause behind our fundraiser. I found that deciding what to do after high school was difficult and a bit overwhelming," Graham said. "Wooden Hawk Foundation and the resources they make available to students would have helped me figure things out. I would have loved to talk to alumni about their path."

A Business Creating a Legacy

For Foundation Founder and State Farm Agent Vanags, Wooden Hawk's mission to help generations of students is personal. "After I lost my husband, I spent a lot of time reflecting on life's purpose and how I could leave the world a better place. With the

help of my family and friends, I decided to build a foundation that would provide opportunities through educational projects and initiatives providing a springboard for their future." Vanags expresses gratitude for the ability to apply her philanthropic business mindset to the growth of the foundation. "With the support of my customers, I'm able to give back to the community through the foundation. Every customer who brings business to my agency helps us build a legacy for our students. While we cannot change the world, we hope to support our community through the WHF projects and initiatives to give back in perpetuity beyond my lifespan and that of my children's."

Wooden Hawk Foundation to Unveil Futures Center at EHS

In early fall, the Wooden Hawk Foundation will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Futures Center and Alumni Center at Evergreen High School—an initiative coordinated by Futures Center Counselor Janet Anderson. The Futures Center will offer students detailed resources on a wide range of post-secondary options, including military service, the trades, vocational training, community college, elite and traditional four-year universities, and gap year opportunities. The event will also unveil the new Alumni Center, a large interactive kiosk located at the front of the school that provides students with a dynamic way to connect with Evergreen High School alumni and explore potential career pathways. The Center is funded by the foundation in part through proceeds of the mountain music festival. For more information, go to woodenhawkfoundation.org.

Clear Creek High School Ski Wax and Sharpening Service

Festivalgoers will have a one-of-a-kind opportunity this year thanks to the Clear Creek High School Rec and Tech Program. Run entirely by students, this innovative program will be bringing their professional-grade ski and snowboard grinders and waxing machine to the Mountain Music Fest. On Friday, August 15 from 10 am – 2 pm, attendees can drop off their skis for a wax and sharpen. There is a suggested \$20 donation per pair, with limited availability on a first come, first served basis. To reserve your spot in advance, go to mountainmusicfest.org and complete the online form located under the "Extra Stuff's" section.