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Nevil Hunt photo

King Charles III and Queen Camilla meet students from Sacred Heart High School shortly after the couple's arrival at the Ottawa airport on May 26. Students from the school who are working towards the bronze level of the Duke of Edinburgh's International Award were invited to the arrival and were eager to shake the hand of the monarch.

Front Porch Concerts tuning up for June 19

BY NATHALIA LENCIONI

the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada.

Pull up a lawn chair – the Stittsville Front Porch Concerts are set to return this summer.

This year, the music plays on Thursday, June 19 from 6 to 9 p.m.

The event promises to transform ordinary porches into stages to showcase local musical talent, bring people together and raise money for

The front porch concerts began in 2020 as a respite from the isolation and mental health pressures caused by the

PLEASE SEE PORCH, PAGE 4

Stittsville's best recognized with volunteer awards

COMMUNITY VOICE STAFF

make the community thrive.

The 35th annual Stittsville Volunteer Awards were presented on May 27.

Mayor Mark Sutcliffe was on hand for the event, as well as members of the Griffiths family, representing the late Roger Griffiths.

Since 1990, these awards have been an opportunity to celebrate volunteers who help

PLEASE SEE AWARDS, PAGE 15

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PORCH FROM PAGE 1

Covid-19 pandemic. Sarah Blakely, the event organizer, said the idea came from loving and missing live music.

"As businesses started opening up," she said, "I thought 'Oh man, I wish someone could organize some safe way for people to play music and see live music again.' And then I realized that I am someone and I could at least try to do that."

LIVE MUSIC

She took the idea to the Stittsville residents Facebook group, and it wasn't long before the community got together and turned the dream into reality. Blakely's own band – named Mixtape – has

performed at the beginning of the event every year.

"I'm so grateful for every single one of the participants," Blakely said.

"I might be the one who's sending out emails and updating maps and stuff, but this event really belongs to all of us, and it would be nothing without them. I've had such great responses from performers, from organizations, businesses and all the community members. Everyone got behind it and it's not hard to make something like this happen when everyone wants it to be a success."

In the past the concerts have raised money for mental health charities, but this edition will direct all its proceeds to the Brain Tumour

Foundation of Canada in honour of Blakely's late brother.

"My brother unfortunately passed away from brain cancer," she said. "And he went every year. So, it's going to be a tough year for me. He was so supportive of me in this event. I thought it would be nice to honour him by helping to raise money to support that foundation.

"I've also come to have many discussions with people who have been affected by brain tumours. Unfortunately, I know this hits home with a lot of people in the community."

The front porch concerts are powered by Stittsville's own musicians, many of whom have become adored local favorites and event staples. Parallel 45 is one of those bands – composed of Mike Gaines, Tom Blain, Reg Cable and Dan Bekkers, friends who met while working at Mitel in 1986 and bonded over their love for music.

"For us, it's really about having fun playing music together," said Gaines. "We get together every week at our bass player Reg's house in Burritts Rapids; he built the house and a basement studio himself. It's a nice, big, dedicated room, so we just show up and play."

Gaines said they don't play



Photo provided

The band Parallel 45 is just one of the free musical options for those who walk local streets on Thursday, June 19 from 6 to 9 p.m. as the Stittsville Front Porch Concerts return.

gigs very often, only about five times a year, but are always happy to play for a good cause. He also said the band's repertoire is very eclectic – with Cable, the bassist, having country music roots and Blain, the guitarist, being a multi-instrumentalist with a passion for playing mandolin and penny whistle.

"We have fun when we're playing," said Gaines. "We love to play, and I think that is somewhat infectious. If you're watching a band and they're clearly having fun, you tend to have fun yourself. There's nothing about playing that we're tired of, even though we've been doing it for so many years. It's not about being absolute masters of our instruments – it's much more about loving music, playing together and engaging the crowd in that."

Gaines said Parallel 45 is working to finish recording an album of original compositions and the song he's

most excited to see released is called The Mighty Elixir.

"It's a song by Reg," he said. "And it's meant to be a bit of a whimsical song. It's about the old snake oil sales guys that would come to town, and they've got a bottle of something they say will cure any-

"People are often surprised at how talented their neighbours are."

Sarah Blakely

thing at all. It doesn't matter what's wrong with you, just take this, you'll be fine."

The concerts aren't just for established bands, anyone in the community can sign up to perform.

"We do a callout in the spring through emails and social

media," said Blakely. "A lot of the same people come back every year, but we always welcome new acts. Everyone donates their time and talent."

Blakely said performers range from solo artists and family groups to full bands, covering genres from pop and folk to jazz and blues. "People are often surprised at how talented their neighbours are," she said. "There are so many hidden talents in our community."

The concerts are free to attend and perform in, and have been designed to be very accessible and welcoming, with a Google Map showing all the porch locations, band names, set times and music styles so attendees can find their way around with ease.

"People tell me they look forward to it every year, which kind of blows my mind," said

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